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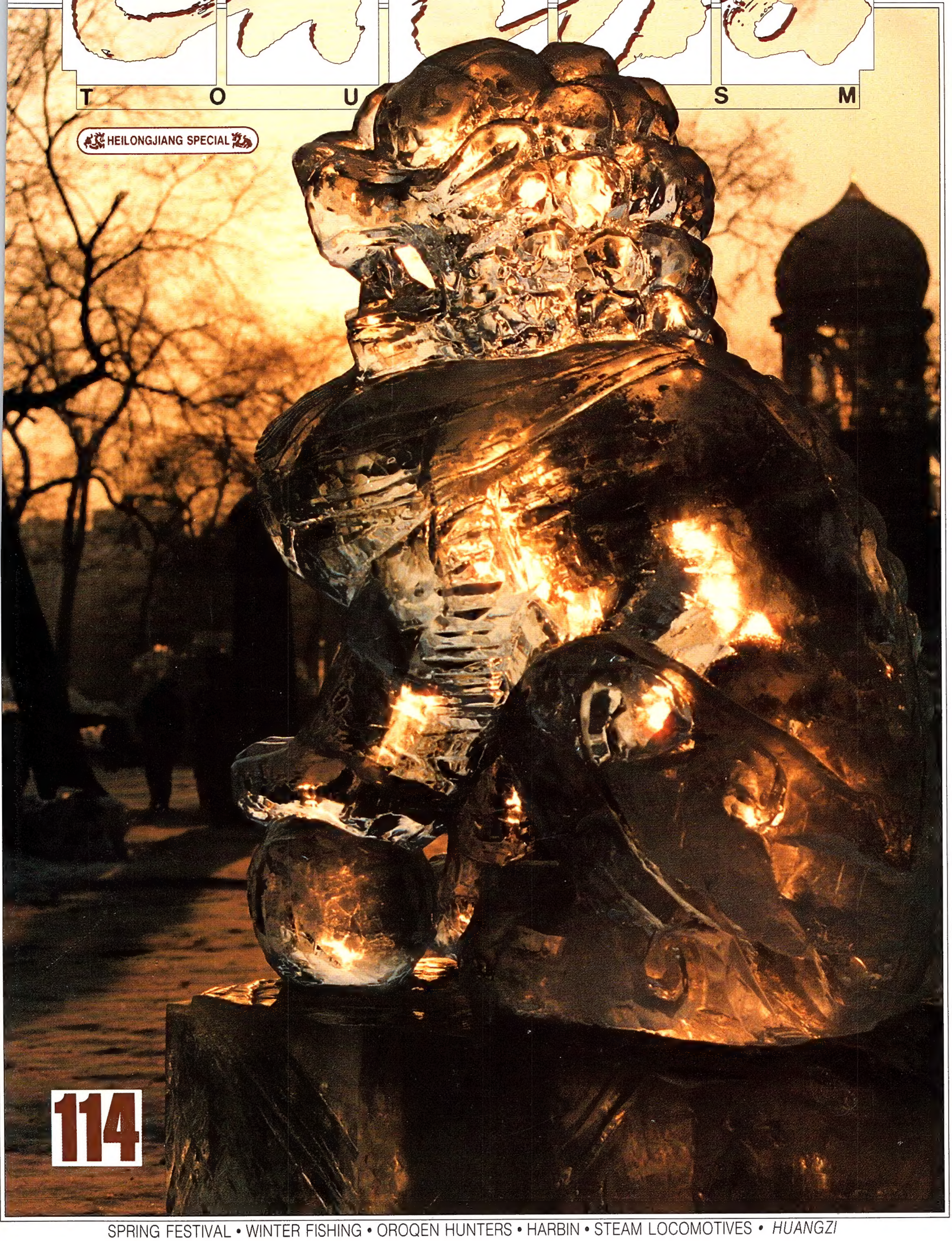
HEILONGJIANG SPECIAL



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EDITORIAL

The Quintessential Winter Wonderland!

Forming China's northeastern tip and bordered to north and east by the Soviet Union, Heilongjiang is rich in natural resources. The highly mechanized farms of the Sanjiang Plain make this one of the nation's major grain and soybean producers, while Daqing is the site of an enormous oilfield which at one time produced well over half China's crude oil.

But probably, for the majority of visitors, the province's most striking feature is that it is China's answer to Siberia. The winter is a peak period for tourism because of, not despite, the cold. The tourism authorities of the capital Harbin have developed their Ice and Snow Festival so successfully that the coming Spring Festival will mark its sixteenth anniversary.

Undeniably, the bright lights, the red glow of the lanterns which grace every house, and the cheerful *yangko* dancing and singing at this time add much charm to the snowy landscapes throughout the region.

This is also the season when hunters come into their own, whether they are visitors enjoying the new facilities at a series of hunting grounds now open to foreigners, or the native hunters of this region, the Oroqen, who still keep up many aspects of their traditional way of life. These and many other themes are explored in our Special Features section.

We beg your understanding for the increase in the price of CHINA TOURISM – the inevitable result of rising costs all round – which will come into effect next month. And, on a much more congenial note, we take this opportunity to wish you a happy Christmas and a prosperous and healthy (non-lunar) New Year!

Front cover: Lion ice sculpture at the Ice and Snow Festival in Harbin, Heilongjiang (by Gao Shan)

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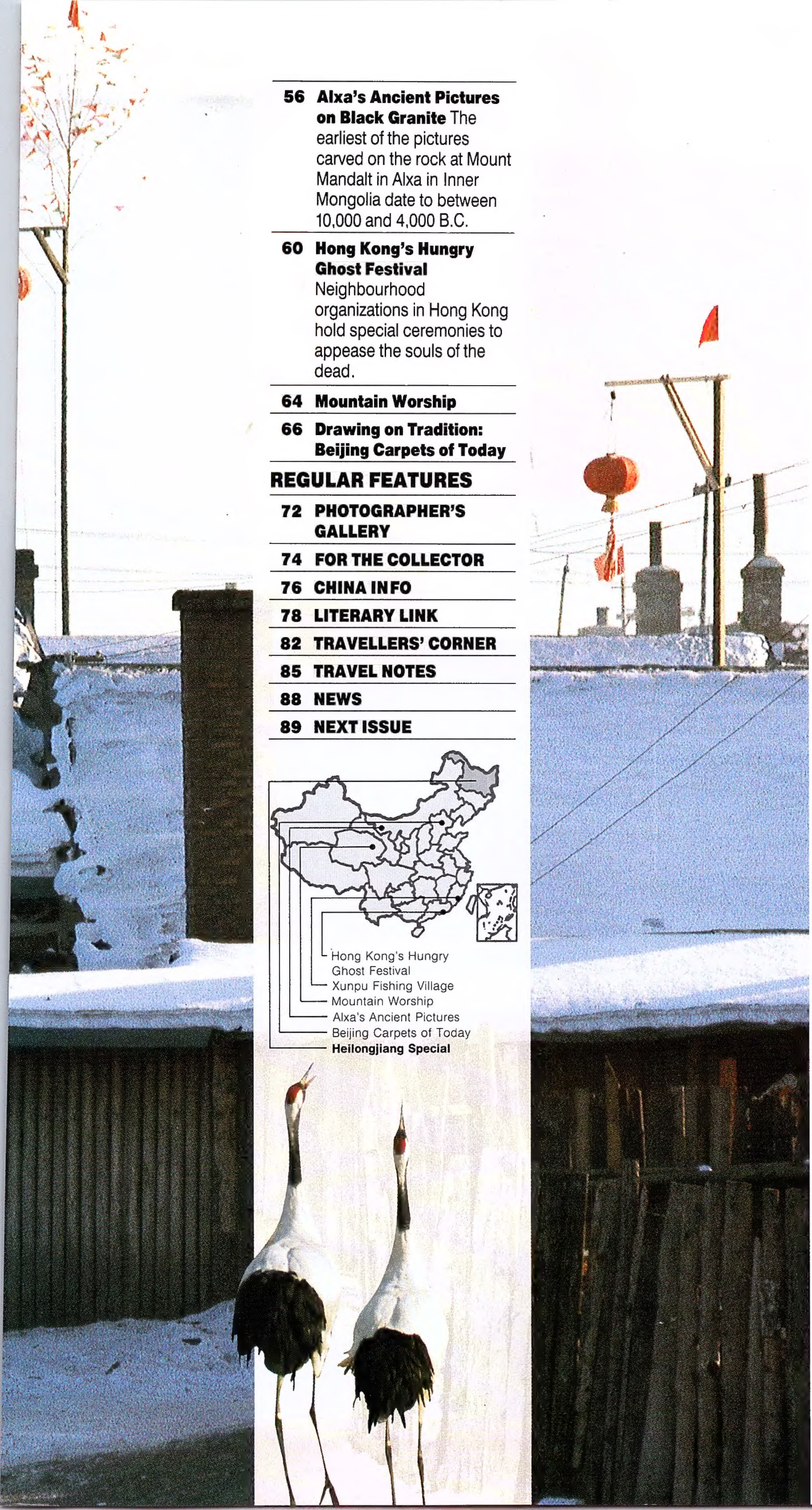

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HEILONGJIANG SPECIAL

Spring Festival in a World of Snow and Ice

PHOTOS & ARTICLE BY AN GE

Used to the mild Hong Kong winter, my friends were horrified when it was announced that some of us would be going to Heilongjiang towards the end of January in order to experience the Spring Festival (Lunar New Year). 'Aieeya!' they exclaimed. 'It's so cold up there that the chickens won't move and the dogs won't bark!' They warned us that we would have to stick adhesive tape to the metal parts of our cameras, otherwise our eyelids would freeze on. A ghastly thought!

Apart from its vast mountain chains, the Greater and Lesser Hinggan Ranges, this northernmost province of China bordering the Soviet Union also includes the Songnen and Sanjiang Plains. Because of the latitude, with some areas in the permafrost zone, winter can last here for more than five months, January being the coldest month. The provincial capital is Harbin, located on the River Songhua in the south.

Red lanterns (1) to light up the new year (2) (both by Ma Yixing)

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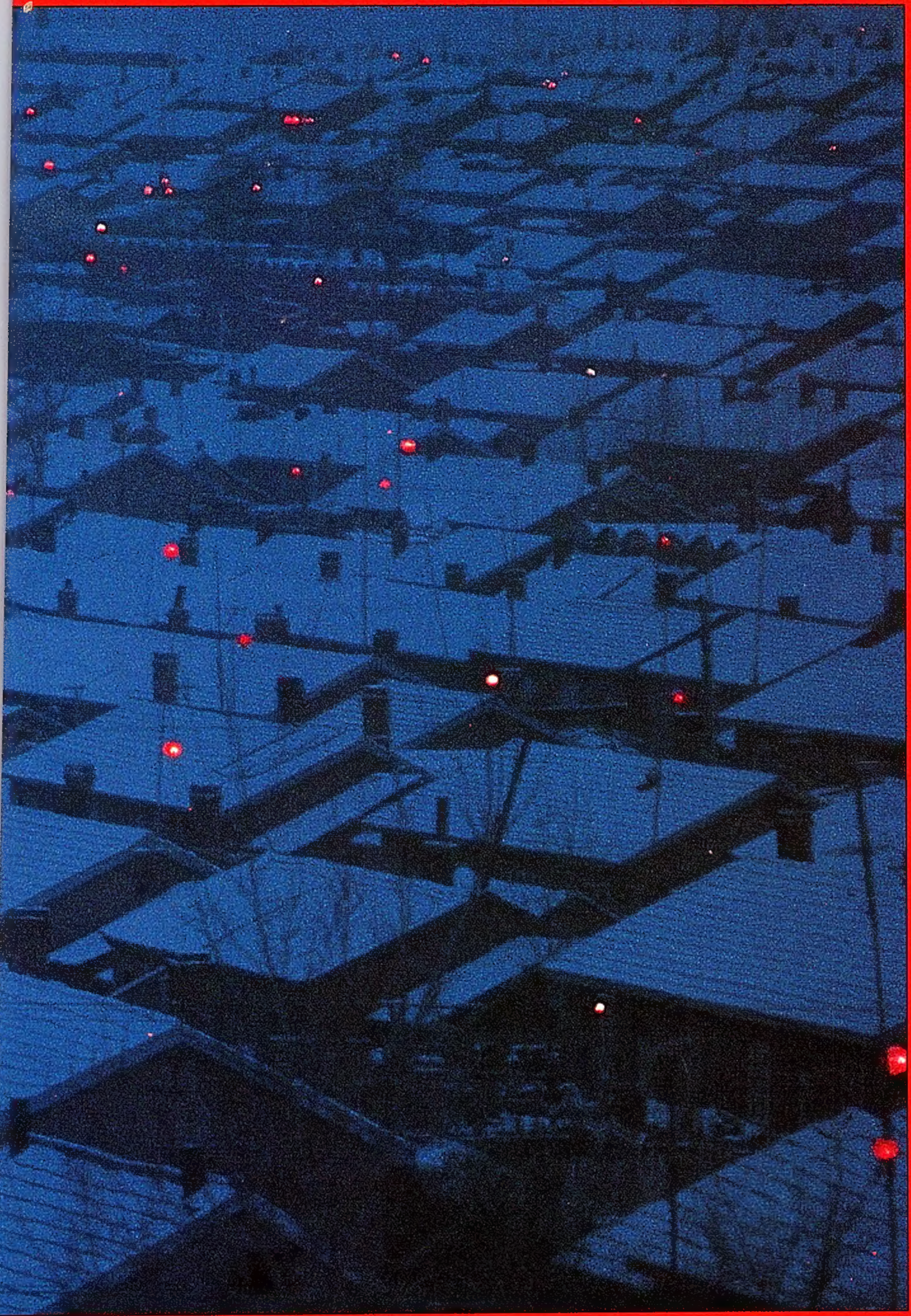

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Three hours after take-off from Hong Kong's Kai Tak Airport we were already flying over the Great Wall. The sky was sunny and very clear. From my window seat I looked down and saw that the ground was snow-free. But in Jilin Province further to the northeast the villages were already surrounded by white. I started to worry about our arrival in Harbin further north. The runway at Harbin Airport was probably iced over or deep in snow — would we be able to land safely?

My anxiety turned out to be groundless. The runway had been cleared; snow was piled up on both sides ready to be carted away. The landing was absolutely normal.

But as soon as we stepped off the plane, the piercing wind caught us. I felt as if I had been slapped in the face by a very cold hand, and my legs shuddered involuntarily. The place seemed like one vast refrigerator!

Old Customs Survive

In order to make the most of the snowscapes, we decided we would first go to Hailin — reputed to have some of the heaviest falls in Heilongjiang — in the southeast of the province, then continue to Taoshan further north for the Spring Festival itself.

It took us eight hours by train to reach Hailin. The train sped through the silent night. One village after another flashed past, the snow on their roofs taking on a bluish cast under the night sky. The red lanterns hanging in front of the houses glowed, adding dots of brilliance to the monochrome plain.

There were crowds of people on the train going home for the public holiday. It used to be the custom in the northeast to stop work for two or three months. This is no longer possible. However, from the first to the fifteenth day of the first lunar month (that is, February 6 to 20 1989 and January 27 to February 10 1990) they stay home, two or three generations together, eating, drinking, visiting relatives and setting off firecrackers. Since this is the most important festival in the year for most mainlanders, one big fellow sitting opposite us was surprised that we were travelling so far from home, against the general trend.

Preparing for the Occasion

When we arrived in Hailin, all the passengers — laden down with packages big and small — clambered off the train and trudged off along snow-covered roads. Although it was still several days before New Year, a festive atmosphere already prevailed in the town.

Traditional fairs are held everywhere in the region three days before the big day. This was the first day of the fair and there were streams of people on every street in Hailin, everyone eager to do their shopping. Since custom dictates that no shopping is done for the first fifteen days of the new year (after all, shopkeepers want a holiday too!), families have to stock up with sufficient provisions in advance

1

2

The watery sun (1, by Ma Yixing) tells its own story. In Hailin, the snow falls thick (3, by Xu Xuezhe) and ice patterns (4) and icicles (5) can be see (6), and every household erects a lantern pole (7).

o cover the festive period. The main purchases are foodstuffs such as dried beancurd, poultry and pork, fruit, peanuts and wine.

Festive food for the local people centres on dumplings and steamed buns with a bean stuffing. These dishes are prepared before the Spring Festival and put outdoors to freeze, then stored in large cloth bags in the granary.

Many a household erects a pole in front of the home and hangs a palace lantern from it. Strips of colourful cloth adorn the top of the pole, which is a mass of branches and twigs. As snow is blown off the lanterns by the wind, it swirls prettily in the air. These lanterns are left in place until the day of the Lantern Festival.

New Snow for the New Year

Most impressive to me personally was the day before New Year's Day. We had arrived at Taoshan the night before. On the morning of New Year's Eve there were still many people at the local fair. But in the afternoon the streets grew increasingly quiet until they were completely deserted. The only signs of life as people began to prepare for that evening's special dinner were the wisps of smoke curling up from kitchen chimneys.

In these parts, New Year's Eve is an important private family occasion when everybody gathers to eat special dumplings stuffed with meat and vegetables. Friends are not invited. As the old saying goes, 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do.' We stayed in the hotel for dinner. However, at midnight we went out again to let off firecrackers to celebrate the arrival of the new year with plenty of noise to welcome the gods and frighten off evil spirits.

In the early morning, on New Year's Day, the hotel resounded with jubilation. Lying in my warm bed, I could hear cries of 'It's snowing!' Throwing on my clothes in haste, I went out and found the trees and ground covered with a new, thick fall of snow; it must have been snowing all night.

At nine o'clock, drums, gongs, horns and the popping of firecrackers announced the arrival of the *yangko* dance troupe. We joined the crowds in the main street and watched as the colourfully dressed dancers paraded in formation, some carrying two baskets on either end of a shoulder pole, others teaming up to carry sedan chairs. There were also some stilt-walkers. It's easier to walk on stilts in the snow because the snow is soft and spongy and 'holds' the stilts firmly ... or so I was told.

Winter Sports Interlude

This place, Taoshan, is famous as a ski resort. Its ski slopes are about four hours away by train. The hills here on the edge of the Lesser Hinggan Range are low, ideal for beginners.

First we took turns with a sled, but this does not demand too much skill. So we decided to try to ski instead, although none of us had ever been on skis before. There are two pistes, one of 1,200 metres, the other 800 metres. Needless to say, we did not have an easy time of it. I spent most

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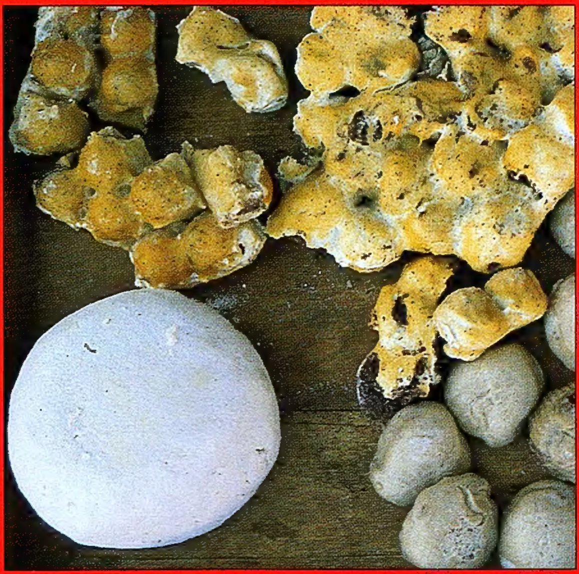
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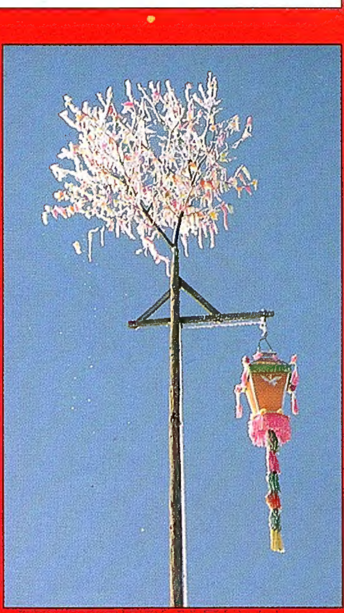
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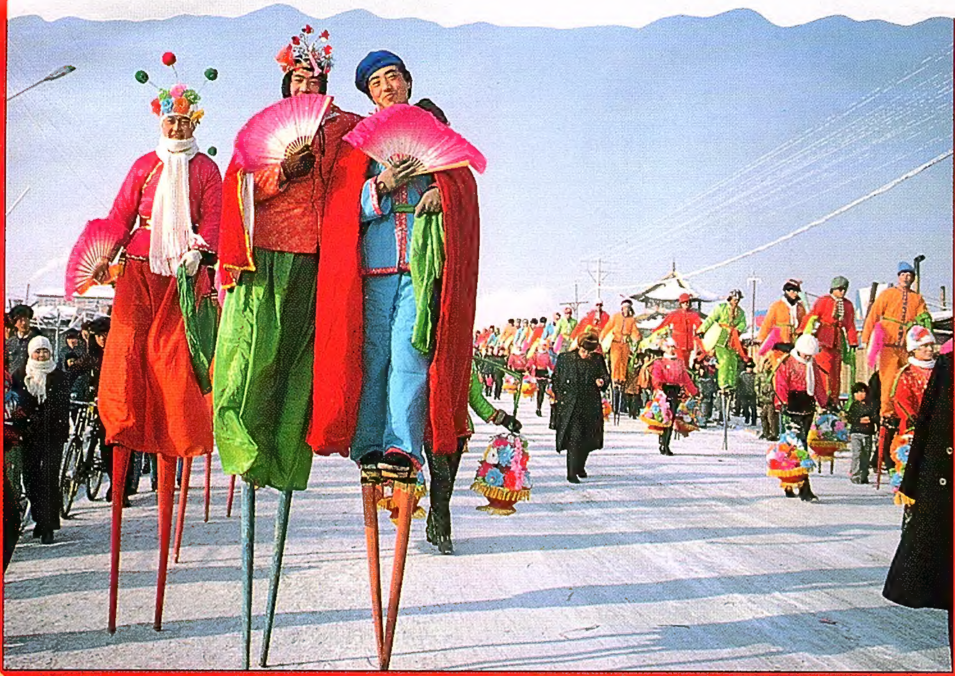
everywhere. Before New Year's Day, hawkers spread out their wares (2) (2 and 5 by Wang Fuchun), dumplings and buns are set outdoors to freeze



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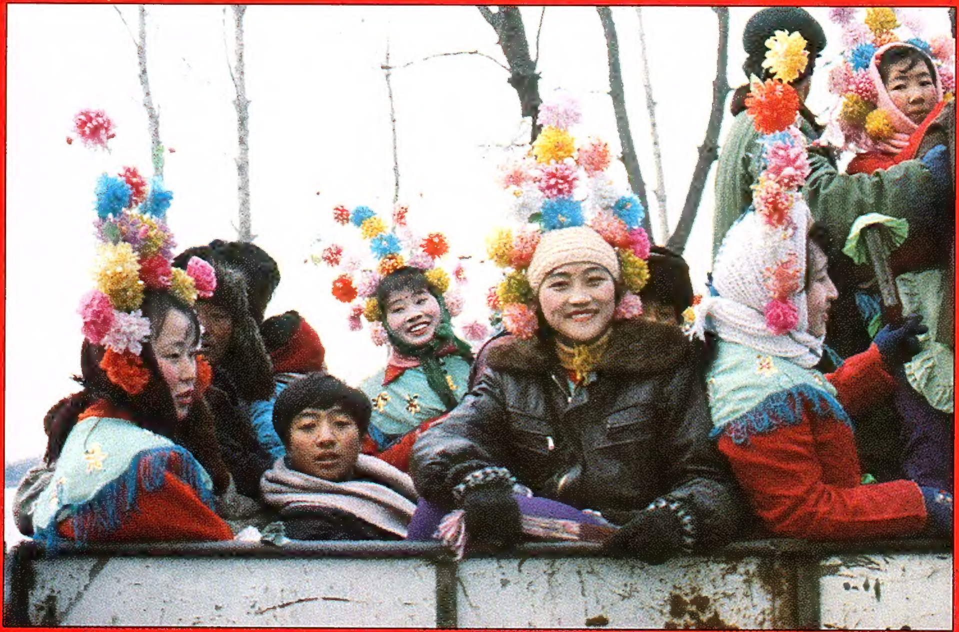

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of my time at the beginning on my back. But we persisted, struggling to keep our balance on the snowy slopes. My efforts had me sweating profusely, and I had to strip off layer after layer until I stood there in just a thin T-shirt. At last, to my amazement, I succeeded in making it once down the nursery slope, wobbling and unsteady, but at least without disgracing myself.

We continued to Dailing by train with the intention of seeing even more of the wintry beauty of the virgin forests. It took a whole day through the forests to reach this town, which is located south of the Lesser Hinggan Range.

The forests and everything in them were covered with snow, including the winding path leading to the top of a mountain. We climbed the path in silence, conserving our strength in the teeth of the biting wind. After more than an hour of upward toil we reached the summit where there was a watch tower. Looking into the distance, we could see the range undulating into infinity, crested with the dark-green majesty of cypress and pine forests. It was cold up there, so cold that we had to rub our hands with snow to bring back some warmth.

On the way down I felt very thirsty and wished that I had remembered to bring something along to drink. Our guide gave me directions and I soon found a tiny spring hidden under the ice by the side of the path. Regardless of the cold I scooped up water in my bare hands and drank it. The icy water was pure and sweet. By comparison with the ambient temperature, which was then −20°C, it felt warm.

Celebrating the Lantern Festival

From Dailing we went west to Langxiang – again by train, the major means of transport in this region during the winter – and stayed there for a few days to experience more of the holiday atmosphere. Then, on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month, that is, the day of the Lantern Festival, we went south to Hulan, a county town just north of Harbin.

In the past, the main emphasis of this ancient festival was indeed lanterns, hence its name. Today, however, the high point seems to be the *yangko* song and dance and associated folk activities. On this day *yangko* troupes go into action all over Heilongjiang Province. They travel from place to place, performing in city, town and village, making this a very special occasion, a celebration for one and all marking the end of the Spring Festival.

A lot of *yangko* troupes converged on Hulan, arriving on all sorts of transport. Some of them were travelling by bus, their 'big-head' masks stuck behind the front window to attract attention. Others were on a tractor with colourful balls of flowers forming their headdress, or on a horse-drawn cart with one of the young men up front cracking the whip while all the girls in the troupe giggled and joked behind. The whole of the northeast seemed to join in and celebrate with them....

Translated by Yu Zai Xin

Taoshan for winter sports (2), a delight for children in particular (4, by Wang Jian). Stilt-walkers in Taoshan (1), and some of the many yangko

4

5

roupes on the move at the Lantern Festival in Hulan (3 and 5).

Winter Fishing on the Lake

PHOTOS BY LIU XIANGYANG
TEXT BY HAO YE

A hundred kilometres southwest of the city of Mudanjiang in southern Heilongjiang Province lies a lake known as Jingpo (Mirror) Lake – the largest barrier lake in China. It was formed long, long ago when a volcano erupted and blocked the course of the River Mudan with its basalt lava flows. The lake, which has an area of ninety-five square kilometres, is forty-five kilometres long from north to south and up to six kilometres across. Fishing is an important part of the local livelihood here, the main period being June to August.

In winter the lake freezes over and forms a layer of ice around one metre thick. But this does not mean that everything stops until the thaw! As I looked out of the window at my lodgings beside Jingpo Lake one bitterly cold morning, I saw scores of people bustling around on the frozen lake surface and rushed out to join them. I was told that the were local fishermen, mainly of Korean origin. Some were sorting ou huge piles of fishing nets, others were driving trailers on runners loade with fishing equipment, others again were wandering around lookin for a place to fish. When they found a suitable location, they dug a hol two metres wide and three metres long. Now what, I wondered....

They dropped the net through this relatively small aperture, and on of the fishermen produced a one-metre long container pointed at bot ends. He grasped one end of the rope tied to this object, which wa also attached to the net, then threw it in the hole in the ice, where i promptly sank. This was in fact a net-spreading device operated by remote control unit. The fishermen walked in a large circle on the ic while at the same time the fishing net spread out below. I estimate that the net was several hundred square metres in diameter.

When the net was drawn in, we saw countless fish leaping around i it: whitefish, pike, carp and many other species. The catch was good

Photo by Chi Weichen

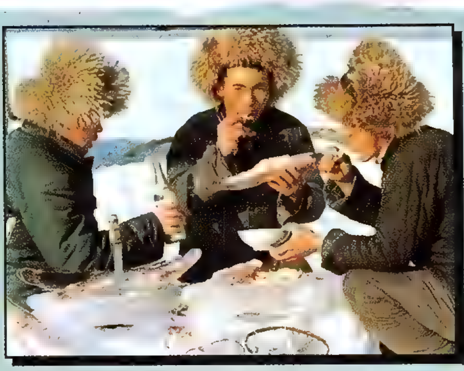


Photo by Chi Weichen

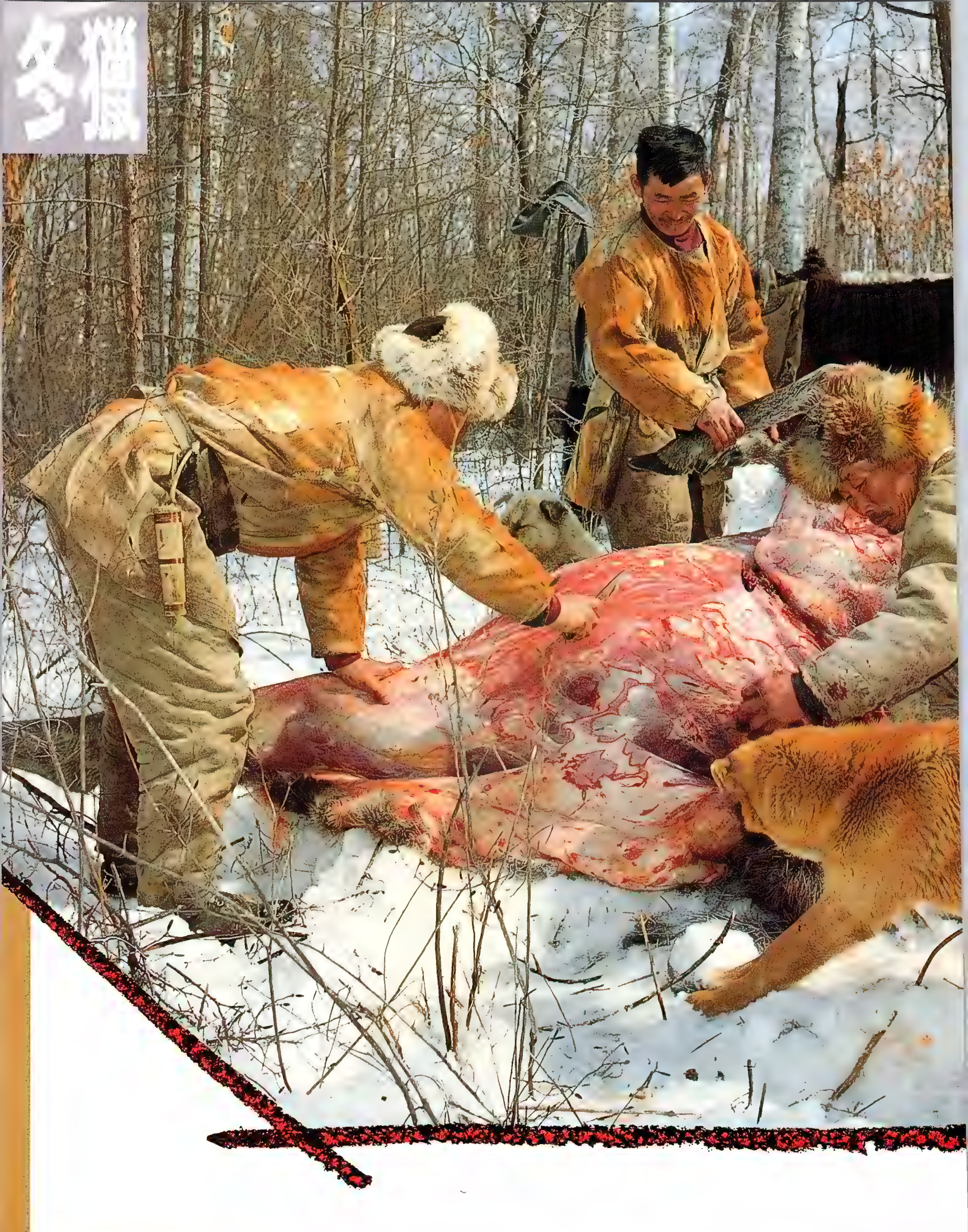
lthough the fish were disappointingly small. Since it was much colder ut of water than below the insulating layer of ice, they expired very uickly when exposed to the freezing air.

As the fishermen began to distribute the catch and take their share way, a man with whom I had been speaking earlier came up holding a ouple of pike. With a minimum of words, he produced a knife and kilfully cut the raw fish into thin slices. Next — as though by magic — e produced a bowl of sauce containing garlic and ginger. He dipped a lice of raw fish in the sauce and threw it into his mouth, encouraging ne to follow suit. In my opinion this can certainly bear comparison with *ushi*, the delectable slices of raw fish for which Japanese cuisine is amous. Since the sauce also contained alcohol, it warmed us up icely.

This hospitable man told me that he was no expert compared to the Hezhen. He was referring to one of China's smallest minority groups, numbering not much more than one thousand people. The Hezhen fishermen, who live mainly along the rivers Heilong, Songhua and Wusuli in eastern Heilongjiang, call this *sushi*-type raw fish *sulaka*, meaning 'shavings'.

We all ate heartily. As my new friend took his leave, I glanced at my watch and realized that I had been on the ice for three hours already. I hadn't noticed that my feet were numb with cold and it took me ages to get some feeling back into them!

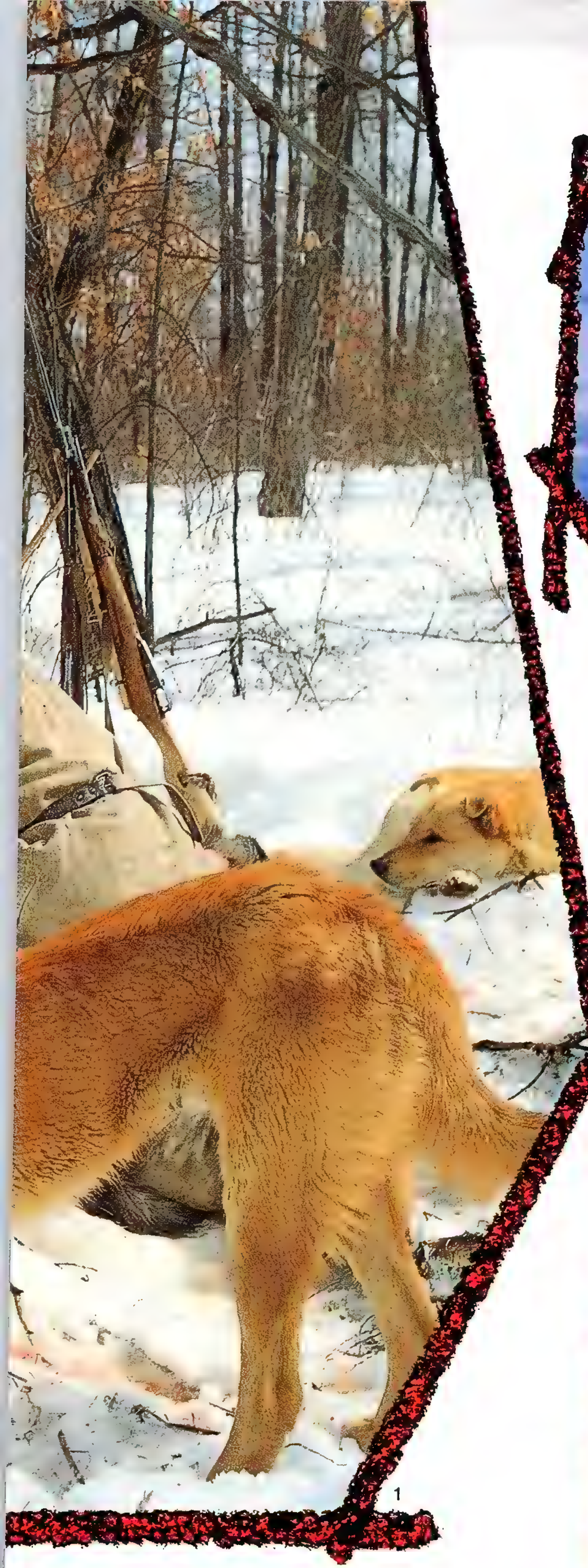
Translated by Wang Mingjie



Skinning the catch (1). Once the sun goes down, everybody huddles around the fire (2). In the hunting camp, meat is eaten practically raw (3).

Hunters of the Oroqen Nationality

PHOTOS BY WANG JIAN
ARTICLE BY TIAN HUO



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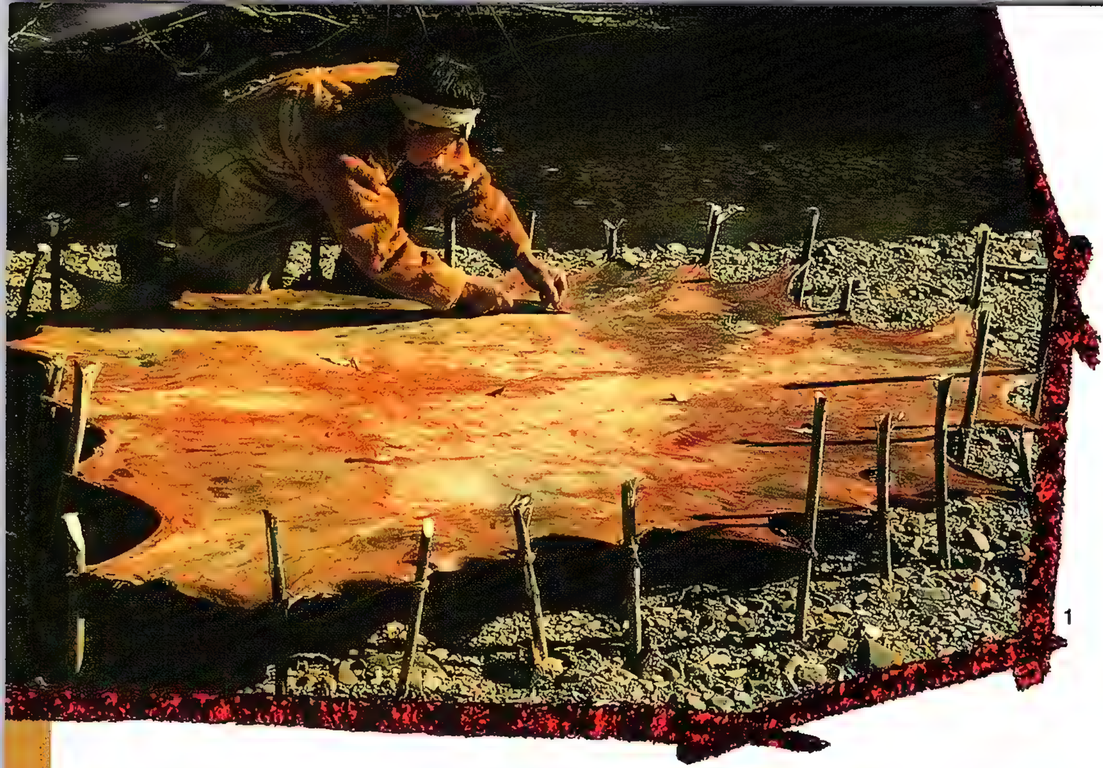
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With hunting rifles cocked, safety catches off, the tall, sturdy Oroqen hunters roam the birch forests in the vicinity of the River Huma in the Greater Hinggan Range. At the slightest suspicious sound they check, their eyes searching the shadows between the trees. Then gunshots ring out — the signal for their trained hunting dogs to rush forward. When the hunters eventually reach them, they find a large deer lying there, dead, its wound still oozing blood into the snow. The dogs stand guard around the kill, tongues out and panting hard.

Such a scene is nothing uncommon in the winter along the Huma — the 'river of life' in Tungus, the language of the Oroqen — in northern Heilongjiang. The Oroqen people who live on the eastern slopes of the mountains are still as fond as ever of hunting 'with a rifle and a strong horse'. This is their traditional way of life, passed down to them through the generations, and they embrace it with pleasure whenever they get the chance. They hunt to obtain meat for their community, but also to get furs and skins which they can take to market and sell for cash. This is known as one of China's best fur-producing areas, and winter — when animals have their thickest coats — is the best season for this purpose.

The Greater Hinggan Range stretches for 1,400 kilometres from north to south and has peaks rising to 1,950 metres above sea-level. During the winter the temperature here can drop to over 40°C below zero, and the snow lies more than half a metre deep on the ground.

However, the hunters are not deterred by the conditions. They go out just th same, using a variety of techniques whic they have developed for specific types o animal and bird species. At the start of th mating season, for example, they lure el and deer by using special whistles whic mimic the call of the male animals whic then come in search of their 'rival'. Th Oroqen also hunt the boar, lynx, sable an bear (the latter connected with all sorts o ancient taboos, as it was once one of thei totems). Since they know every detail o their prey's pattern of activities and lif cycle, as well as the topography of th hunting grounds, the Oroqen make super hunters.

When they succeed in catching an animal, several men squat on the groun and skin it, then cut it up immediately. Th individual joints are loaded on the spar horses to dry in the biting wind. The wind dried meat produced is something like th 'pemmican' or 'jerky' of the early North American trappers.

Back in camp, the skin is spread out fla on the ground and wooden pegs are inserted along the edges to keep it taut while the residual flesh and fatty layers are scraped off. When the hide is dry, the fur is removed and the leather is kneaded for a long time to make it soft. The Oroqen may sell the skins or keep them for themselves, tanning them to make robes, tunics, leggings, boots or even the traditional cone-shaped tents.

2

Carousing Around the Campfire

Living in the harsh environment of the Greater Hinggan Range, the Oroqen have developed certain habits which ensure survival despite the amount of time they spend in the open air.

After dark, the temperature in the snow-smothered forests may drop to −50°C or thereabouts. The hunters gather around and warm a bottle of alcohol by setting it over a water-filled vessel over the fire. Perhaps understandably, the Oroqen (or at least, the men) are heavy drinkers. One man can easily knock back a whole bottle of *shaodaozi*, *ganbai* or *daqu* (types of schnapps made from barley and wheat). The Oroqen say that the alcohol runs down the oesophagus like fire and burns the stomach, from where it radiates warmth all over the body!

Wind-dried meat accompanies the alcoholic beverages. Everyone takes a meaty bone, holds it over the fire for just a few seconds, dips it in soy sauce or some other condiment and then, holding the edge of the meat in his teeth, cuts it off near his mouth with a hunting knife.

In addition to the practically raw meat, the Oroqen also eat a sort of blood pudding

Removing the fatty layers is the first step in preparing the hide for use (1). Birch is important in Oroqen life: a child fetches birch logs (2, by Yang Zhijun), cradles of birch bark (3, by Jin Zhiyong), and birch bark canoe (4).

3

— but only if they have been lucky enough to catch an elk (*Alces alces*), the largest of the deer family. The elk's blood is mixed with wild leeks, pepper and salt and cooked in block form. Elk kidney is considered a great delicacy and is usually stir-fried. Or the elk's liver and heart may be presented, still raw, as a sort of hors d'oeuvre.

(Continued on page 89)

4

冰城

HEILONGJIANG SPECIAL

Harbin's Winter Face

PHOTOS BY PENG ZHENGE
ARTICLE BY SHAN REN

It was snowing hard the day we reached Harbin, a city with a population of around two million and the capital of Heilongjiang Province. Harbin is situated at a height of two hundred metres above sea-level at around latitude 46° in the northern part of the Dongbei (Northeast) Plains. Also known as the Songliao Plains, these extend from the middle reaches of the River Nenjiang to Liaodong Bay and, with an area of about 350,000 square kilometres, are China's largest plains. Affected by the cold front from Siberia, Harbin begins to experience light frosts from October onwards. Winter proper starts in November and lasts for more than five months until early April of the following year.

It is particularly cold in Harbin at the time of the so-called Ice and Snow Festival. 1989 was the fifteenth year this festival had been celebrated, and it ran from the first week in January until mid-February.

Artistry in Snow and Ice

The River Songhua, which runs through the city, freezes hard in winter and you can walk on it without danger of falling through the ice. The local people say that the faster you walk on ice, the less likely you are to slip or fall — a point to note in Harbin!

Braving the violent gusts of wind, we ventured out to Taiyan (Sun) Island in the middle of the river. The snow on the island pile up knee-high most winters. As it is particularly clean and white, th snow can be moulded and coloured very effectively. A sno sculpture competition (the winter equivalent of a sandcastl competition!) was introduced two years ago and has proved ver popular. Unfortunately a warm spell had started a temporary tha and there was not much to be seen while we were there.

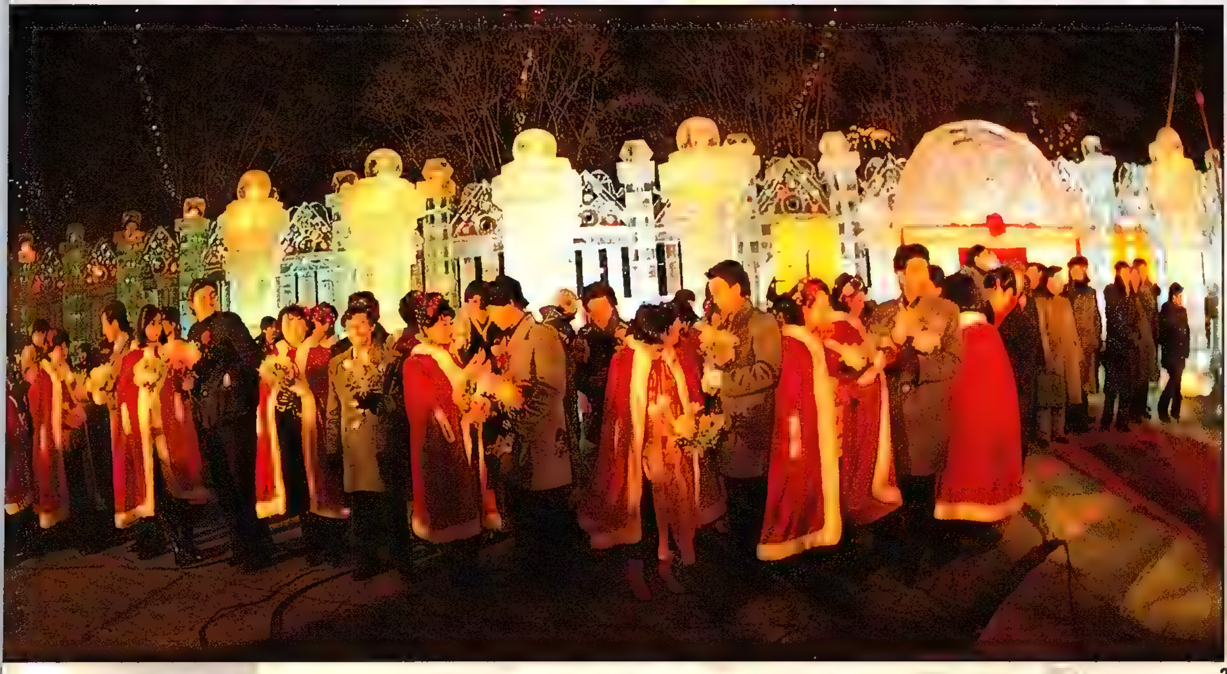
Ice sculptures, on the other hand, could be seen all over the city by the river, on Taiyang Island, in little parks, even at the entranc to government buildings or in the courtyards of houses. I learne that there had just been an international ice sculpture competitio in Harbin. It was held in Zhaolin Park and eighteen ice-sculptor from six countries had taken part. They used huge blocks of ic from the River Songhua to create works of art which were displaye in the park, gleaming in the weak sunshine. I was told that the would last for around six weeks. Since they are completely natura and not fitted with such 'modernities' as coloured lights, these ic sculptures are best viewed during the daytime.

The ice of the River Songhua is said to be more transparent tha most because of the way in which the river freezes. The fast-flowin river also carries very little silt. The ice may reach a depth of ove one metre. Blocks one to two metres long are sawn out of the ice smoothed and chiselled, and used as the raw materials for the ice sculptures. For the very large sculptures which need several blocks of ice, all the workers need do to bond the blocks together is spray them with water, which of course freezes immediately — no meta rods or frames are used.

That night we returned to Zhaolin Park where an 'Ice Lantern Party' was being held. Colourful ice lanterns of all kinds and sizes greeted our eyes, and a thousand ice sculptures were scattered

1

Elaborate ice sculptures, whether natural (1) or fitted with coloured lights like the Manfeilong Pagoda (4), are everywhere in Harb



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e of the Japanese team adds finishing touches to their entry in the international ice-sculpting competition (2, by Gao Shan). Mass wedding in Zhaolin Park (3, by Wang Fuchun).

2

3

A winter swimmer makes friends (1, by Wang Fuchun) as another prepares to tal

4

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through the park in fifteen groups. They included houses, bridges and pavilions. A few years ago, I visited Damenglong in Yunnan's Xishuangbanna to see the Manfeilong Pagoda. Zhaolin Park contained an ice replica of this pagoda. It was a perfect imitation, down to the tiny niche containing Buddha's footprint.

The above are just a few of the events featured in Harbin's Ice and Snow Festival. We were also fortunate enough to attend a 'mass wedding on ice' on Xiaonan Island in Zhaolin Park that same night. Forty-seven couples from Beijing, Wuhan, Xi'an, Tianjin and other cities had gathered to be married here. Flowers in hand, the young people climbed on to the platform to the traditional backdrop of *suona* (horns) and drum. Then, couple after couple, they climbed to the top of an ice castle and slid down a long chute. The fun attracted a large crowd. Some of the younger spectators were hatless although their cheeks were bright red with cold. Who could spare a thought for the weather at such an exciting time?

Lovers of Winter Sports

It is said that the Eskimos of the Arctic regions have more descriptive words for snow and ice than anybody else on earth. However, the people of Harbin also seem to have a fairly rich range: 'clear snow' for powdery snowflakes, 'light snow' for a sparse fall, 'cotton snow' for large, dense snowflakes, 'smoke-bubble snow' for a blizzard which shakes the power lines and is so strong you can't even open your eyes against it....

Up here in the northeast, snow is not only seen as an omen of a bumper harvest, but as a purifier and destroyer of germs. After snow, it is true, even the air seems purer.

Northerners worry a lot about the smallest crack or hole in the walls of their homes because of the risk of draught. All homes are solidly built and have double glazing. Thick cotton or woollen curtains are hung over the doors. The heating is turned up full, and the difference between the inside and outside temperatures can be in excess of 25°C. This of course makes the room air very dry, as was true of the hotel where we were staying; every morning when I got up I felt as though I had a hot lump in my throat.

However, in spite of the extreme cold, Harbiners do not like to stay cooped up indoors. At the end of October, when the first snow falls – only to melt in the morning – and thin ice forms on puddles and ponds overnight, they start to dress much more warmly. In November the cold starts in earnest, with the temperature dropping to −20° to −30°C, and the snow no longer melts!

This is when the people of Harbin indulge their enthusiasm for all sorts of winter sports. Walking around the city, we often watched people pouring water on to the ground in the vicinity of secondary schools, university buildings and factories. The wet ground soon freezes into a perfect ice rink. Some of the larger sites even have space for an ice-hockey pitch in the centre of the 'rink'. In the winter 80% of physical education classes at Harbin's schools consist of skating, which may have something to do with the fact that about 60% of Harbin's population can skate.

But there are plenty of other sports to enjoy, especially on the frozen River Songhua near Taiyang Island and Stalin Park. For example, ice yachting. This is a sailing boat on runners or skates which can reach a speed of thirty kilometres an hour when the wind is right. A ride on a horse-drawn sleigh is another option, and there is sledding for those who prefer to be under their own power. Or you can slide down a chute from a platform the height of a three-storey building.

Wrap Up Warmly!

The one sport which any southerner would have great trouble in identifying with is winter swimming. Early one morning we set off dutifully to watch swimmers in action on the River Songhua. A

e plunge (3, by Wang Jinglin). On the way to play ice hockey (2), out shopping (4) or enjoying icecream (5), Harbiners seem to shrug off the cold.

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Snow-frosted tomatoes on sale (1) and market vendors (2) ectangular pool, roughly twenty-five metres by fifteen metres in size, had been cut from the ice in the centre of the river. After the thin new ayer of ice, formed overnight, had been cleared, several men and women – who had been doing warming-up exercises in their swimsuits – mounted the 'diving board' fashioned from ice and dived into the water, a near-freezing 4°C. They swam around vigorously while we spectators stood shivering in our thick clothes and fur hats. There was a significant difference in temperature! After their morning swim, these hardy specimens dried off casually and went to get changed.

Local friends told us that some of the people who do this every day during the winter are well over sixty. They claim that it brings a variety of health benefits; some of them have experienced a reduction in hypertension, others have had chronic arthritis cured. But, most of all, they felt it improved their general health. There were also children among the swimmers, some only eight or nine.

Harbiners do not fear the cold; but clothes of course also play an important role. During the 1950s, Harbin is said to have been full of people in dogskin hats and sheepskin coats. Today, people wear a greater variety of warm clothing: fashionable quilted coats, anoraks, woollen overcoats, leather overcoats, and so on. I saw the occasional woman parading a smart racoon or silver fox coat through the streets. Of course, such clothes are expensive. But those who attach great importance to appearance are ready to spend quite a lot for a quality winter coat. After all, the winter lasts for nearly half the year!

Thus warmly wrapped up, the residents of Harbin not only enjoy going shopping at a temperature of below −20°C, they even seek out the many pedlars selling ice lollies, icecream and cold drinks in the streets. In addition, they have learned how to turn the climate to their advantage. Ice blocks from the River Songhua are put into cold storage for use during the brief summer and the space between the domestic double glazing is used as a sort of refrigerator. People often sprinkle water over a big piece of meat or fish and leave it outside the house to freeze, or even bury it in snow until the spring.

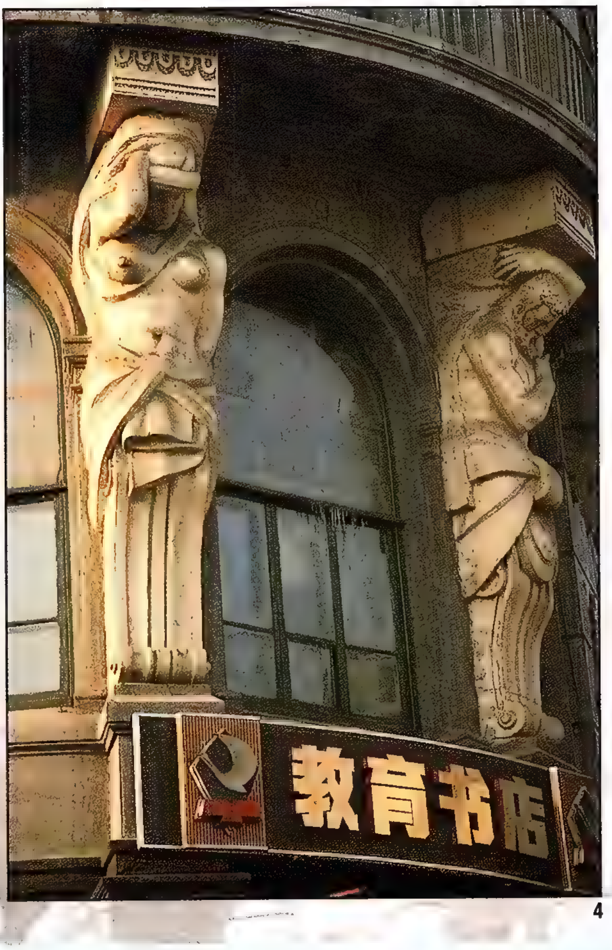
Miscellany of Architectural Styles

Even though Harbin had long been a small fishing settlement on the river bank, it was only after 1898 when the Russians made it a major railway station, the pivot of the Chinese Eastern Railway – built between 1897 and 1903 – that it developed into a city. The decades of Russian presence are reflected loud and clear in its buildings. Since French culture was greatly admired (French was the language of the Tsarist court), one can also pick out traces of this in the architecture. Even after the Russian Revolution of 1917, large numbers of White Russian refugees crowded into Harbin and kept the cultural influence alive.

One famous example is the Qiulin Department Store, Harbin's largest, a four-storey building with a Russian dome. Underground there are two layers of tunnels, former air-raid shelters and munitions depots, which are now rented out to several hundred business people selling all sorts of goods.

There are many other Russian-influenced buildings in Harbin, incorporating a variety of European styles: Gothic or neo-Gothic, Baroque and neo-Classical. The business centre, Zhongyang (Central) Street in Daoli District, for instance, is lined with such structures. Many of the shops, restaurants and government offices along the street sport a variety of domes, as well as steep 'tent-shaped' or pointed roofs. The tall building which houses the Education Bookstore has an elaborate neo-Classical facade adorned with two allegorical figures, one a bare-breasted female, a rarity in Chinese cities. And it seemed to me that the exteriors of most of the buildings here are finished with warm colours. Perhaps an attempt to lessen the monotony of the grey-and-white winter townscape?

Translated by Wang Mingjie



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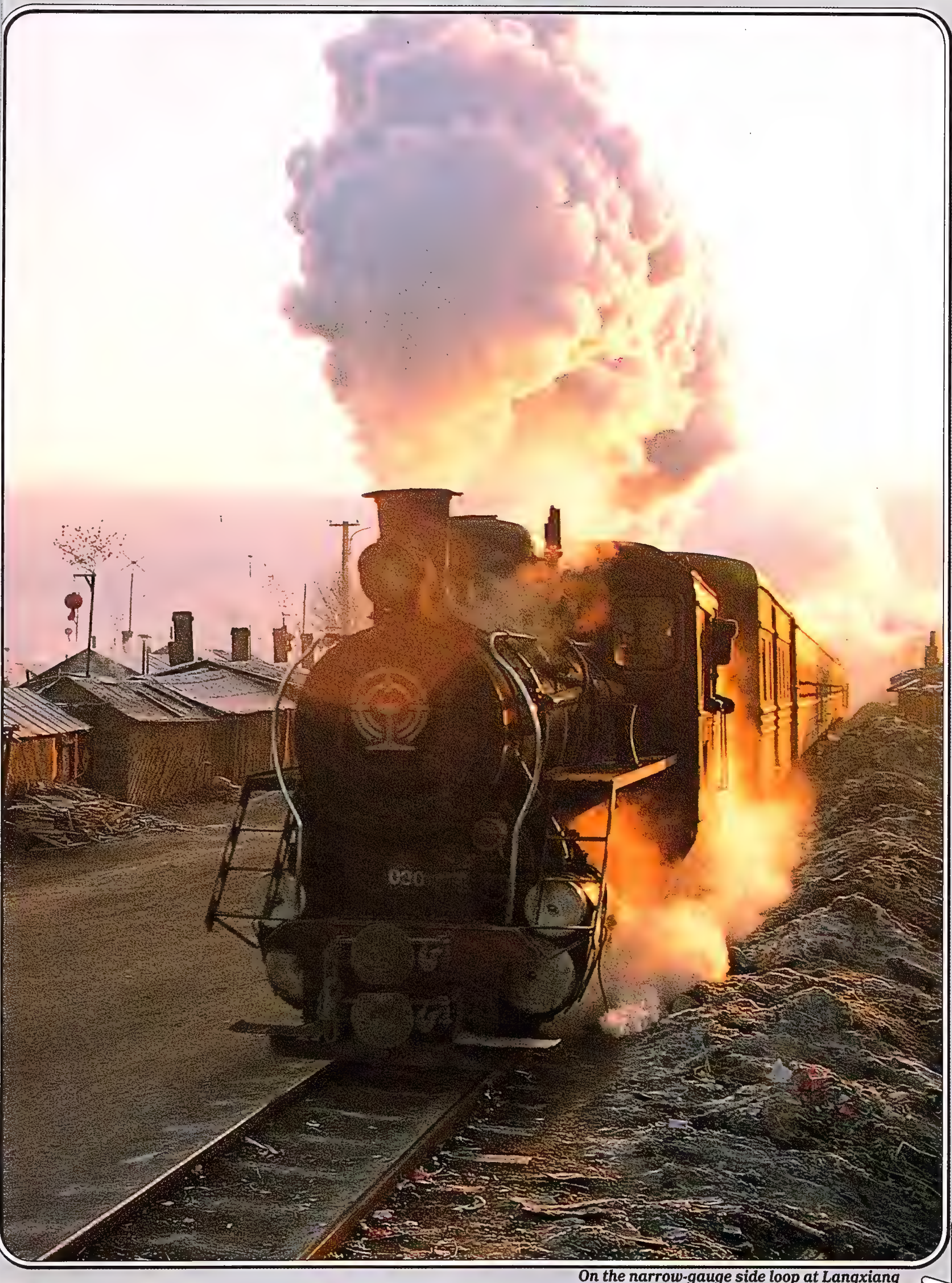
Examples of the Russian influence: Qiulin Department Store (3), the facade of a bookshop (4), and the paved roadway of Zhongyang Street (5).

HEILONGJIANG SPECIAL

Full Steam Ahead!

PHOTOS BY PENG ZHENGE
ARTICLE BY AN GE



On the narrow-gauge side loop at Langxiang

One evening at dusk I walked out of Harbin's railway station in the direction of the old city. I passed over the arched Jihong Bridge — like a red rainbow — built by the Russians in 1926. A long, shrill whistle below my feet signalled the passing of a train. Steam rose in the air, engulfing the bridge and me. Passers-by and cyclists increased their pace to get clear. I leaned on the rail as the steam dispersed and noted the railway tracks spreading out like the veins of a leaf to accommodate all the trains that approached the station.

Harbin has always been an important linchpin in north-eastern China's railway transportation network. Set at the junction of two major and three secondary lines, it sits like a spider in a giant web. The Russians started to build the Chinese Eastern Railway as early as 1898, with Harbin as the nucleus. The railway line extended to Manzhouli in Inner Mongolia to the northwest and Suifenhe to the east (and thence to Vladivostok), intersecting with the South Manchurian line to Dalian in Liaoning to the southwest. This was the railway which arose from the signing of the Sino-Russian treaty of 22 May 1896 in Moscow as part of the defensive alliance against Japan. Russia was granted a 99-year concession but, in fact, after the completion of the line in 1903, it was only a relatively short time before the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-1905 which ended in Russian defeat.

In Heilongjiang you can still find a wondrous concentration of steam locomotives. This is partly because of the length of its rail history but also the result of a more recent policy decision. Since the Chinese railway authorities have decreed that this will be the last province to phase out steam, other provinces are sending their old rolling stock up to Heilongjiang for further use.

There are over one thousand steam locomotives of all types in operation in Heilongjiang, a figure which does not include the narrow-gauge locomotives used specifically in the forestry areas. The engines come from Chinese factories, but also from other countries including the United States, Germany, Poland, Finland and Japan.

Narrow-Gauge Local Train

Harbin itself does not have any narrow-gauges. For that you must go to Langxiang, a town 305 kilometres to the northeast of the city. I took a bus from Harbin to Langxiang, where I spent the night. Next morning I forced myself to get up at seven, though a blizzard was blowing up outside, and went straight to Langxiang's railway station. With mountains

Crossing a bridge over Harbin's railway station (1). The station master's office at Langxiang (2) and a view of the driver's cab (3).

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on all sides and piles of timber everywhere, Langxiang in a forestry area is somehow typical of China's northeast.

At the station I bought my ticket then peeked into the station master's office. He was seated before the window. Two old-fashioned telephones, a red and a green flag, and a signal lamp lay on his desk, as did a rectangular device rather like an iron box. It took me a while to understand its function. It was a sort of switchboard containing many iron sticks, fixed immovably with their heads sticking out. When it was time for a train to leave, one of the iron sticks would spring out and the station master would hand it to the engine-driver before he boarded the train. This is a form of guarantee that trains depart on time and according to procedure.

I boarded the narrow-gauge train and was greeted by a blast of hot air. The window panes were thick with ice. The difference between the interior and exterior temperatures was enormous. The train was rather dark and was full of passengers, seated on wooden benches, anxious to get back home. The aisle was narrow, with only enough space for one person at a time. You had to squeeze up if somebody came from the opposite direction.

We started slowly. It took some time to draw out of the station. People came running after us, hoping to jump on and get a free ride.

The train looped through industrial districts, through mining and forestry zones. Since this little train is the main local means of transport — especially during the long winter, when roads are impassable — everybody relies on it for going to work, visiting relatives, shopping in the county town, and so on. It operates to a strict schedule, regardless of the number of passengers, but is almost like a country bus service. Mothers were settling their small children to sleep on the wooden benches. There was even a bride in a red dress who chattered away so volubly she must have known everyone on the train!

International Steam Freaks

It took two hours to reach Dailing. My return to Langxiang on the main line was much faster. Back in my hotel I learned that a tourist group from West Germany was coming to see a steam-powered train in Nancha, east of Dailing.

That was enough for me.... Off I went again on the instant to meet this group of fellow steam-enthusiasts. Some of

The narrow-gauge train is dark but warm (1) and children can snooze in comfort (3, by Wang Fuchun). Locally-made rail buggies serve the forestry areas (2, by Jin Zhiyong).

them were retired engine drivers or former railway employees, others had chosen to live beside a railway line. They all felt a profound nostalgia for steam locomotives since they can no longer see them in normal operation in their own country. One member of the group told me: 'To hear a steam engine thunder past, whistling and blowing, gives you the most magnificent feeling.' Another remarked: 'Whenever I hear a steam engine, it takes me right back to my childhood days. I've been familiar with that sound since I was a child.'

The following morning I joined the group at a convenient hill. There was a bend in the track there so it made an excellent vantage point from which to take photos.

Everybody was busy with their camera equipment. One group took up position to the north beside the line, near the bend, and settled down to wait. Another group climbed the hill to watch the train approaching from the distance. Tripods were erected, video cameras and tape recorders produced. One man fixed no less than six cameras to a special tripod; the cameras would take simultaneous shots of the steam engine. A true steam freak!

It was extremely cold as we stood around waiting. There was much rubbing of hands and stamping of feet to keep warm.. Suddenly, a whistle was heard, we saw the train nearing the bend, and everybody raced to get into position. A chorus of clicks broke out.

As this was an uphill climb the train was pulled by one steam locomotive in front, while another one pushed from behind. The train puffed by slowly. The driver obligingly blew his whistle for a long time then, waving to us, operated the steam valve. We were immediately drowned in clouds of steam – a magnificent sight, somehow a symbol of vigour and industry.

My fellow tourists were fervent collectors of everything to do with the steam age: signal lamps, track signs, kerosene lamps, old railway uniforms, engine parts, etc. They were loathe to pass up any opportunity to increase their collections, and had been on the lookout constantly since their arrival in Harbin.

They were all members of steam locomotive clubs in Europe. They told me that they preferred northeastern China to India and Indonesia – the other main countries where steam power is still current – since the steam dissipates too quickly in a tropical climate. For them, it was a subtle pleasure to see the great clouds of white vapour which linger for so long in the air in the icy, wintry setting of Heilongjiang.

Translated by He Fei

Checking the wheels (1, by Wang Fuchun). Steam buffs in position near Dailing (2, by Jin Zhiyong). Taking the train to her new life (3, by Qi Bowen).

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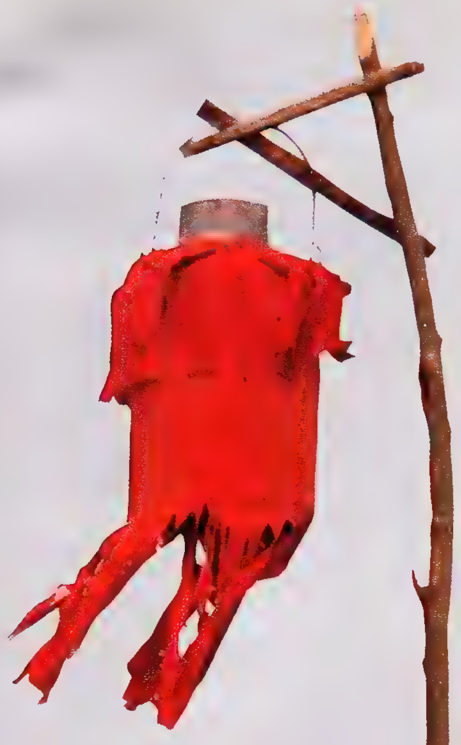


HEILONGJIANG SPECIAL

Random Notes on *Huangzi*

PHOTOS BY PENG ZHENGE
TEXT BY XING YU

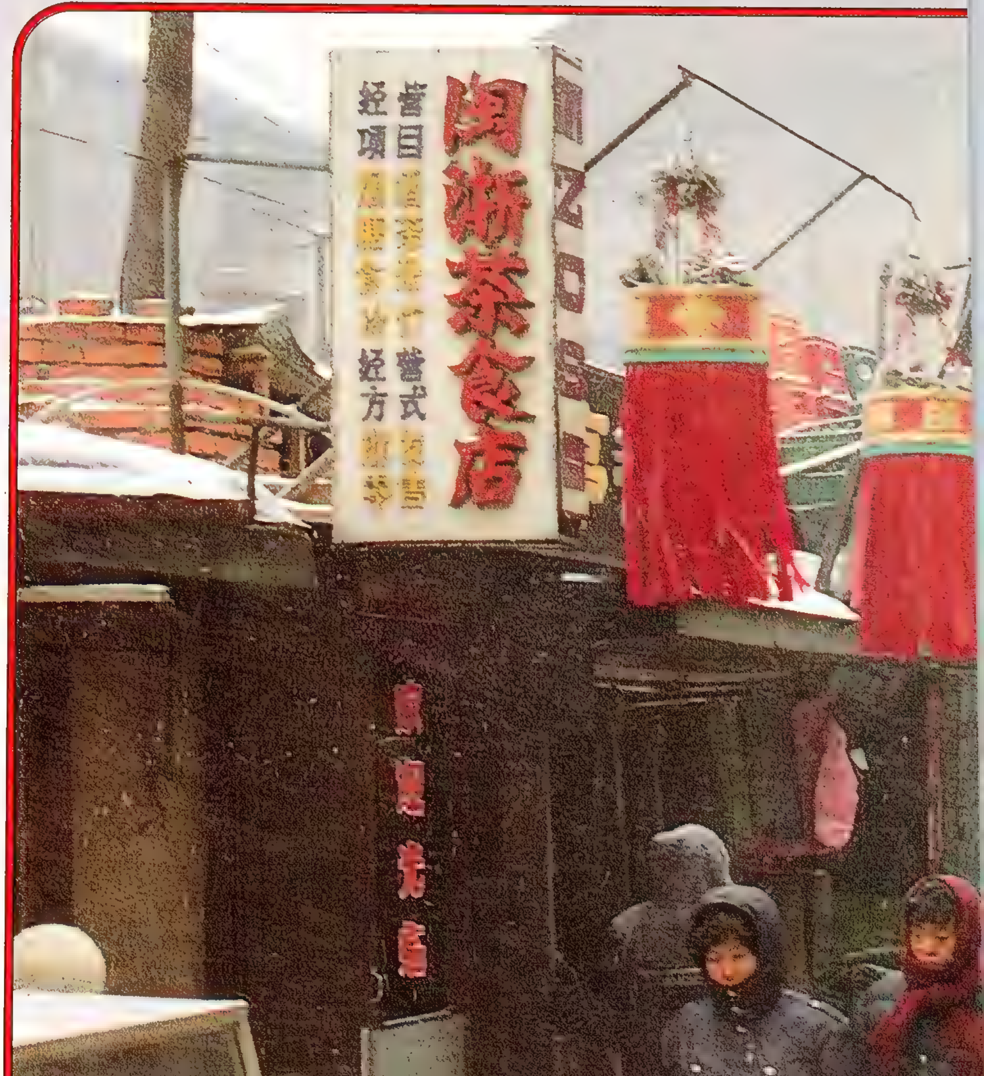
This Spring Festival, when I was in Harbin, the city was packed with tourists from all over China. Only after great effort did I manage to find a small inn in which to spend the night. My running around and the extreme cold had given me a ravenous hunger so, after checking in, I set out again immediately to find something to eat.

'We're Open!'

I passed many eating places in both main roads and back lanes, but they were all closed. When I asked a passer-by the reason for this, he informed me that almost everything shuts down over the Spring Festival. Realizing that I was a stranger to this part of the world, the Harbin man left me with some useful advice. 'Just look down each street to see if there are any *huangzi* hanging up; if you see one, it means there's an eating establishment of some type which is in business. That way you won't wear yourself out trudging up and down every street.'

So I continued, and pretty soon I saw a brightly-coloured lantern-like sign of the type he was talking about. I headed down the street with alacrity. But the door was locked, and the person who opened the door to my knock told me that the restaurant was in fact closed. He apologized; he had simply forgotten to take the sign down! Off I went again on my increasingly weary, famished way....

The *huangzi* which was my target looks rather like a palace lantern with an iron hoop at the top from which hang many tassel-like strips of cloth. These *huangzi* recall the streamers with 'Wine' written in large characters which used to hang outside wine shops and the wooden signboards set under the eaves of teahouses in former times. In fact, the *huangzi* of northeastern China have exactly the same purpose — to attract customers. They are hung up in the morning when the place opens for business and taken down at closing time.



◄ Photo by Sun Zhongxiu ► Photo by Wang Fuchun

An Attractive Sight

According to the locals, it has long been the tradition for restaurants and wine shops to use *huangzi* but no one really knows when and why this custom began. It is certainly a useful idea in view of the weather conditions. Heilongjiang is notorious for its desperately cold winters and doors and windows must be kept shut to conserve warmth. This makes it difficult for potential customers to tell whether a place is open for business or not. If a *huangzi* is hung up outside, people can tell at a glance that it is.

Moreover, for the greater part of the year, the northeast is snowbound. All the brightly coloured *huangzi* somehow add a touch of vitality and warmth to the otherwise monotonous townscapes, even on ordinary days. But before and after the Spring Festival, the *huangzi* are embellished to give them an added festive appeal. Flower balls of various sizes are attached to the wires or strings between the iron hoop and the hooks from which it hangs, and the iron hoop itself is wrapped in a length of red cloth studded with special paper-cuts. At night, electric bulbs installed inside the *huangzi* radiate a welcoming glow.

Hidden Messages

I was told that every part of the *huangzi* delivers some kind of message about food. Thus, when the wires or strings are wrapped in white paper, this means that the place sells steamed food. A white flower on the string means stuffed dumplings are available, while the strips dangling from the iron hoop mean that noodle dishes can be ordered....

There is also significance in the colour of the *huangzi*. Red is the most common colour, but blue *huangzi* are put up by Moslem restaurateurs, who also display the character for double happiness on a blue cloth background.

Nor are these all the hidden messages possible. The number of *huangzi* hung up outside also tells us a lot about the eating place itself. One is for a snack bar, two for premises where wine and food are served, and four for an up-market establishment catering for banquets. But no eating house will ever display three *huangzi*. This is because, in the dialect of the northeast, *sa huang* (short for 'three *huangzi*') is a homophone of *sahuang*, meaning 'to tell a lie' – something to be avoided at all costs!

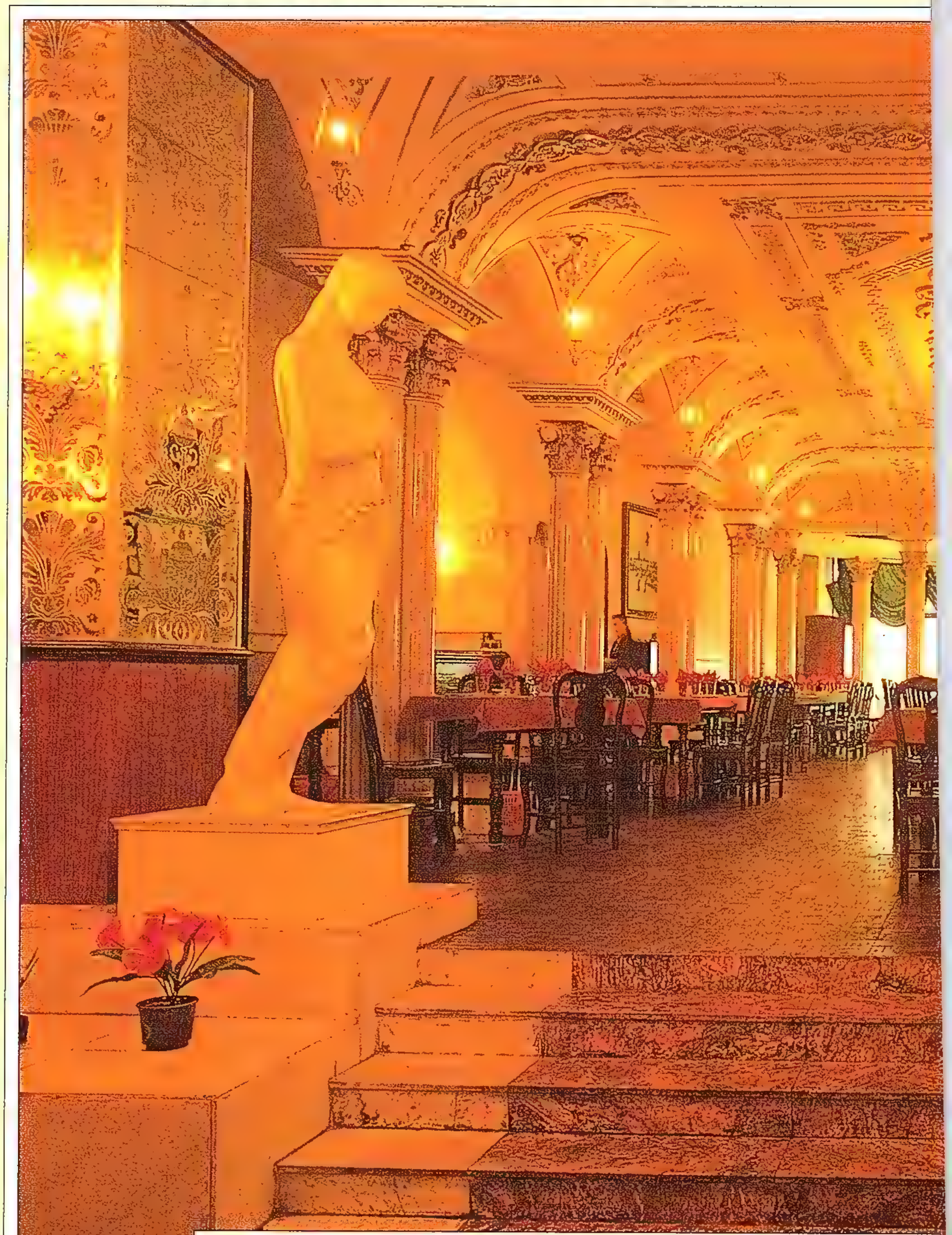
Connection with Emperor Qianlong?

Legend has it that the Qing emperor Qianlong (reign dates 1736-1795) once, when travelling incognito, made the acquaintance of an inn-keeper and a restaurant-owner. The three got along very well and were soon on intimate terms. Later, when the two discovered that their fellow-traveller was none other than their august emperor, they addressed him respectfully as Eldest Brother. The inn-keeper was referred to as Second Brother, the restaurant-owner as Third Brother. Thus it came about that an inn-keeper would hang the *huangzi* outside his inn with two strings, a restaurant-owner with three strings.

This legend is just that . . . a legend. But it *is* true that *huangzi* outside restaurants are hung from three strings!

Translated by Ren Jiazhen

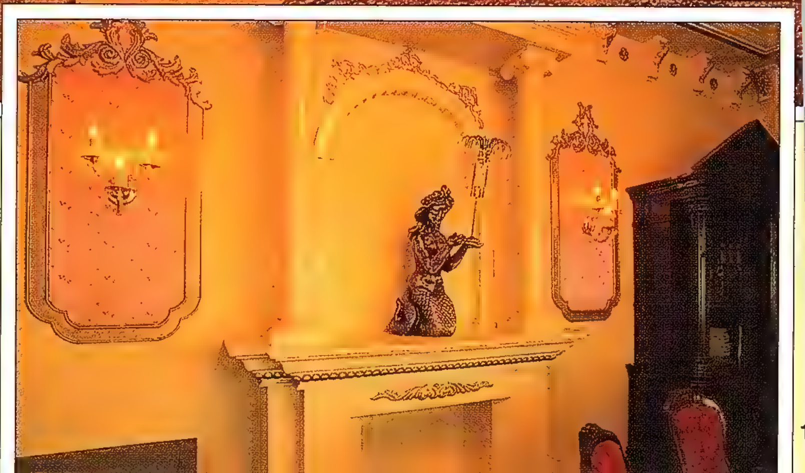
Savouring the Pleasures of Russian Cuisine

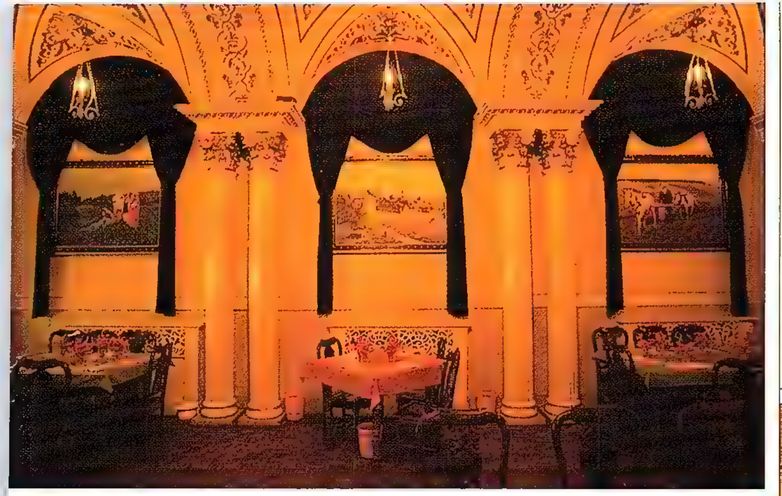


The first evening of our stay in Harbin this past winter, after viewing the outdoor exhibition of ice carvings, we were starving and frozen through and through. Braving the bitter cold, we rushed to Zhongyang Street and into a place famous for its Russian ambience – the Huamei Restaurant. Although its exterior is unprepossessing, even dowdy, inside it is as lavishly decorated and fitted out as a palace!

We took a table in the banqueting hall on the first floor, wanting to try out the Russian menu. I looked around, noting the extensive gilding, the intricate but elegant design of the relief patterns on the ceiling, the glittering crystal chandelier hanging dead centre, its soft lights reminding me of similar chandeliers I had seen in the palaces of Peter the Great (1682-1725) – that great connoisseur of European architecture – in Leningrad. Both sides of the hall were flanked by more than a dozen columns in a neo-Grecian style while the walls were hung with a number of reproductions of oil paintings by famous Russian artists. The decor of the Huamei Restaurant is said to have been inspired by that of the Kremlin in Moscow.

The cosy atmosphere of the place was intensified by the kind of music they were playing. Folk songs such as *The Troika* and melodies such as *Evening in the Moscow Suburbs* added to my feeling of warmth and ease as the snow continued to fall heavily outside.





PHOTOS BY ALFRED KO
TEXT BY HU YUE

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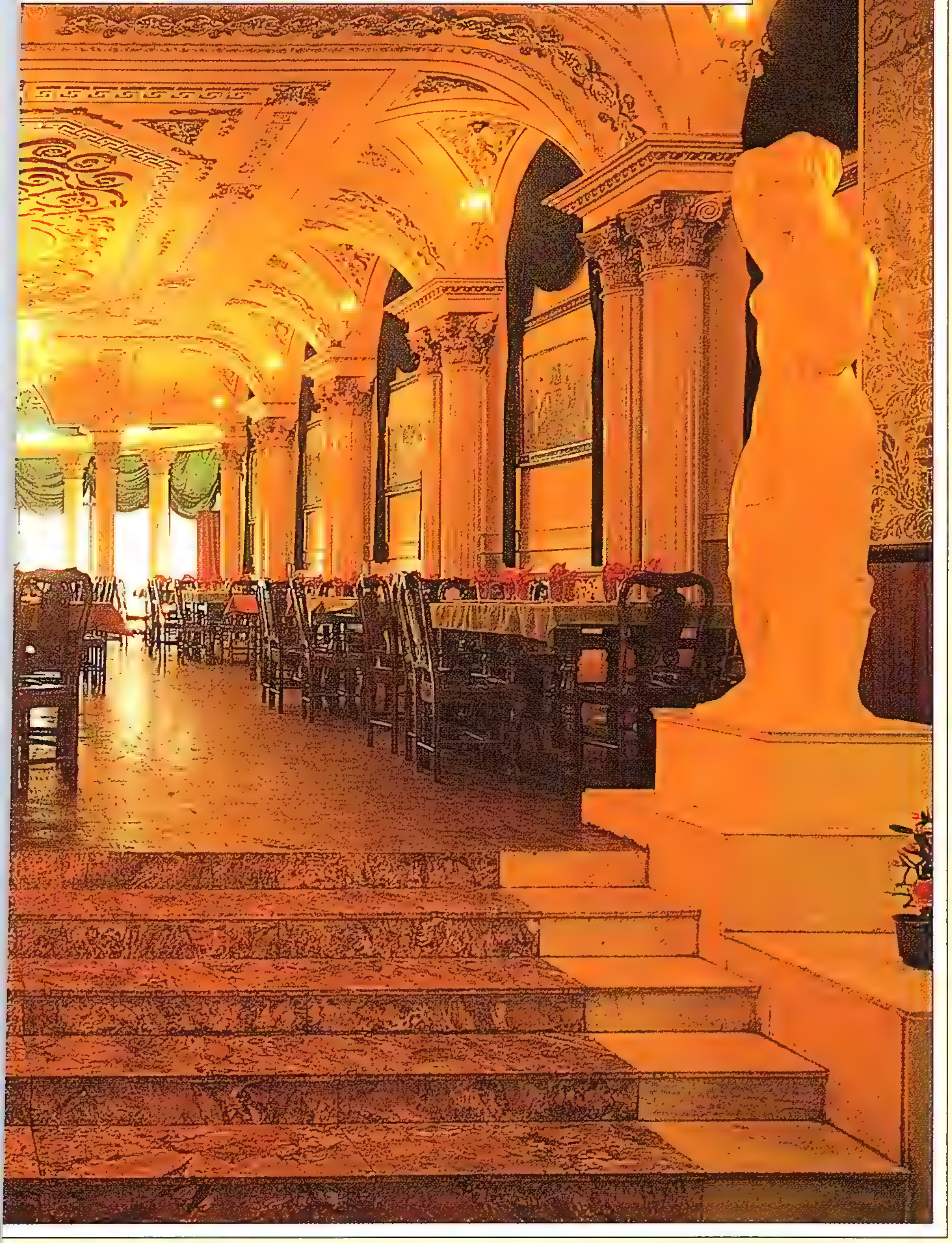

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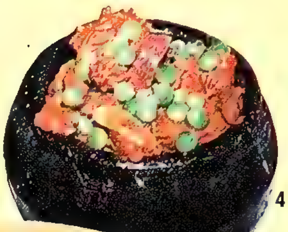
The dishes came at last ... roast sucking pig, deep-fried prawns in batter, beef goulash, all served with the typical rye bread. I was told that the method of cooking was genuinely Russian, and the serving size was certainly generous. The food itself was tasty and tender, and it had the most appetizing aroma.

Founded in 1925, this restaurant used to be known as the Mars Restaurant. According to the manager, its Russian cuisine was introduced from the Soviet Union in the 1920s. During the decades since then, the authentic recipes and cooking methods have been maintained, contributing to the present high standard.

'Russian cuisine', like 'Chinese cuisine', is obviously a most inexact term covering a multitude of regional variations, but it does serve as a collective description for the most famous dishes of the country. Apparently, Soviet citizens who have eaten at this restaurant have claimed that the food is authentic and that some of the dishes served here are no longer available in the Soviet Union itself. Thus the Huamei Restaurant is also preserving something of the Russia of the early twentieth century.

Translated by Ren Jiazhen

Photo by
Su Changde



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New Trends in Heilongjiang Tourism

TEXT BY CHENG CHENG

Situated in the extreme northeast, Heilongjiang is a large province with an area of 460,000 square kilometres and a population of about thirty-four million. Its terrain is varied, offering a range of lovely scenery and providing a good living environment for rare fauna and flora.

Tours are now being arranged to make the best use of the province's natural resources, many of them with a special emphasis: hunting, skiing, bird-watching, fishing, cycling and walking, among others.

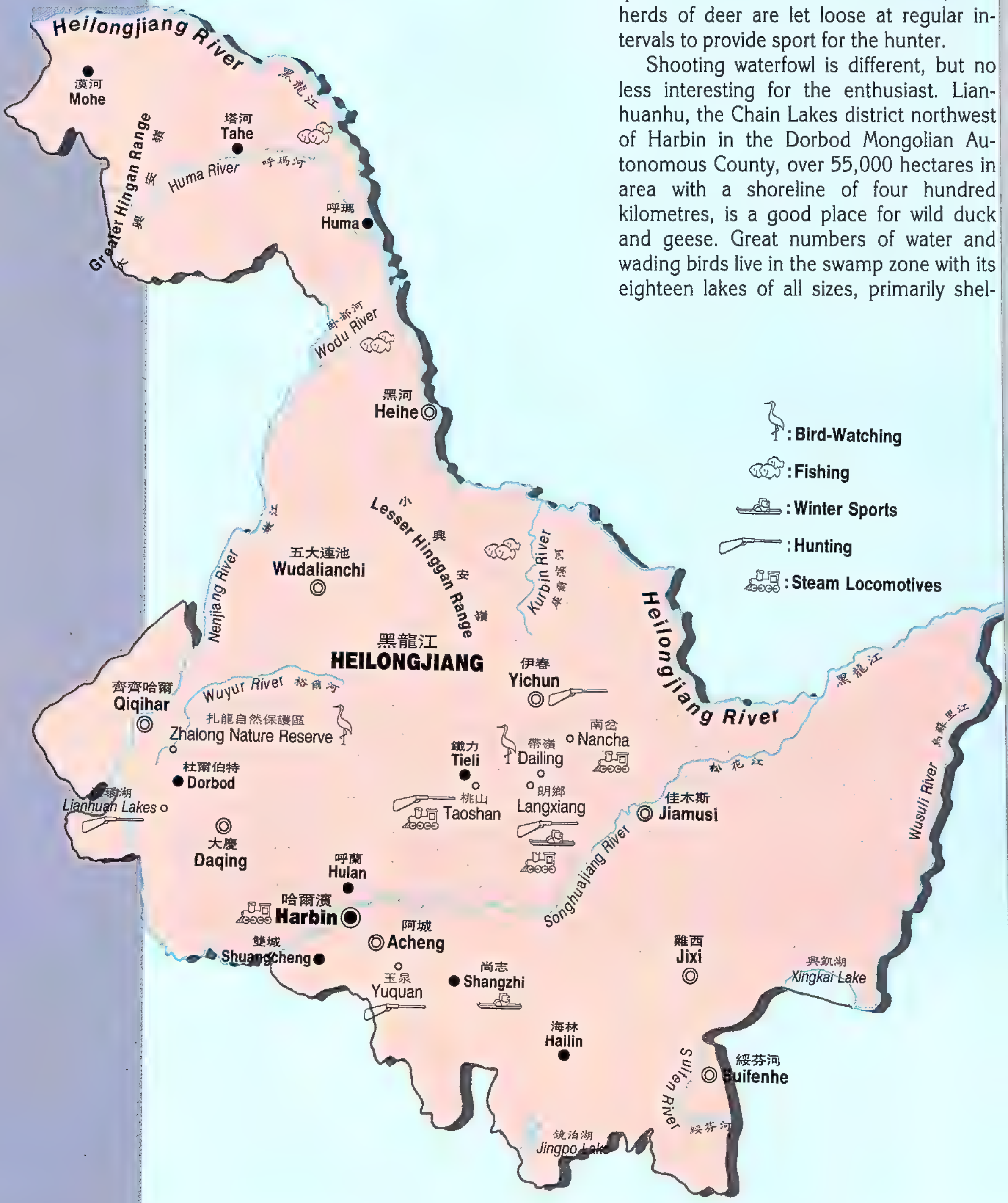
Hunting

This is probably the ideal choice for those seeking excitement and a taste of the great outdoors. The game reserve at Taoshan in Tieli County to the south of the Lesser Hinggan Range covers an area of 62,000 hectares. Its virgin forests are the habitat of fifty-one animal species, including the red deer, black bear, wild boar, roedeer, lynx and snow hare, as well as 250 bird species – pheasant, hazel grouse, woodcock, etc. The hunter will find a trip here very rewarding in terms of the size of his 'bag'.

The hunting season runs from September through to February. Guides are placed at one's disposal, as are hunting dogs, guns and ammunition. There are three wooden lodges in the reserve, comfortably furnished, with a welcoming fireplace in the lounge, a great place to relax and yarn after a day's hunting.

Fifty-five kilometres east of Harbin is another fine hunting area known as Yuquan. There are deer farms here, and herds of deer are let loose at regular intervals to provide sport for the hunter.

Shooting waterfowl is different, but no less interesting for the enthusiast. Lianhuanhu, the Chain Lakes district northwest of Harbin in the Dorbod Mongolian Autonomous County, over 55,000 hectares in area with a shoreline of four hundred kilometres, is a good place for wild duck and geese. Great numbers of water and wading birds live in the swamp zone with its eighteen lakes of all sizes, primarily shel-


Heilongjiang River
黑龍江
漠河
Mohe
塔河
Tahe
Greater Hingan Range
大興安嶺
Huma River
呼瑪河
呼瑪
Huma
卧都河
Wodu River
黑河
Heihe
小興安嶺
Lesser Hinggan Range
嫩江
Nenjiang River
五大連池
Wudalianchi
Kurbin River
庫爾濱河
黑龍江
HEILONGJIANG
伊春
Yichun
Heilongjiang River
黑龍江
齊齊哈爾
Qiqihar
Wuyur River
烏裕爾河
扎龍自然保護區
Zhalong Nature Reserve
杜爾伯特
Dorbod
連環湖
Lianhuan Lakes
大慶
Daqing
鐵力
Tieli
帶嶺
Dailing
南岔
Nancha
桃山
Taoshan
朗鄉
Langxiang
松花江
Songhuajiang River
佳木斯
Jiamusi
烏蘇里江
Wusuli River
呼蘭
Hulan
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Jixi
興凱湖
Xingkai Lake
海林
Hailin
綏芬河
Suifenhe
Suifen River
綏芬河
鏡泊湖
Jingpo Lake
: Bird-Watching
: Fishing
: Winter Sports
: Hunting
: Steam Locomotives

duck, goosander, scaup, snipe, pintail, etc. The season here is April to May and September to October.

Winter Sports

With such a long winter and heavy snow, Heilongjiang is ideal for skiing and other winter sports. The best place to ski is at Qingyun in Shangzhi County, southeast of Harbin. Here the snow lies on the ground for up to five months, with the biggest snowfalls occurring in February and March. The average snow depth is fifty centimetres, but on the high slopes it may be one metre deep; the snow is of good quality for skiing.

There are skilifts to take you to the start of the downhill ski slopes, which include a giant slalom course of 3,060 metres and an ordinary slalom course of 1,300 metres. There are also fifteen kilometres of cross-country pistes, leading through villages and forests and along frozen rivers, and offering unrivalled views of the winter landscapes.

Bird-Watching and Fishing

Bird-lovers can view as many as 230 species of birds at the Zhalong Nature Reserve, a vast swampy area of freshwater marshes in the valley of the River Wuyur thirty kilometres southeast of Qiqihar in the west of the province. This is famous as the home of around 450 red-crowned cranes, a rare species which is facing extinction.

In fact this is an excellent place for cranes in general, since six of the fifteen species in the world are found here, the others being the white-naped crane, the hooded crane, the Siberian crane, the common crane and the demoiselle crane. Another good place for bird-watching is Dailing in the centre of the Lesser Hinggan Range. Tours normally include both sites to cover the widest variety of birds.

Anglers should direct their attention to the rivers Kurbin and Duobukur in the north of the province. The former is a tributary of the great River Heilong, which gives its name to the province, while the latter, a tributary of the Nenjiang, rises in Inner Mongolia and flows east into Heilongjiang. Both rivers have a sandy bottom and very clear water.

During the fishing season, from mid-June to mid-May and from mid-September to mid-October, the water temperature is between 5 and 10°C. Among the species to be caught here are rare ones such as the *hucho taimen* (huso sturgeon) and the *brachymystax lebox*, as well as the commoner trout and pike. The fishing areas are reached by motor launch or rubber dinghy and camping on the banks is an added delight.

Cycling and Walking Tours

In the forests of the Lesser Hinggan Range it is also possible to take a cycling tour. This must be the best of all ways to see the local scenery, visiting deer farms, plant nurseries, ginseng gardens, logging sites and timber mills. May to September is the time for this. You cover about forty kilometres a day through the forests so, for those who like physical activity and pure forest air, this is the one!

Walking is another good way of seeing the sights. A tour can be arranged in the vicinity of Mudanjiang in the south of the province. You pass through the summer resort areas of Jingpo Lake, with magnificent views unique to this part of Heilongjiang. You can also visit areas inhabited by minority nationalities such as the Koreans and the Oroqen people.

In short, the scope of tourism in Heilongjiang is expanding all the time. It is also possible to do boating tours (a trip down the River Heilong, which forms the Sino-Soviet frontier, is planned), take a dip in the therapeutic volcanic mud baths at Wudalianchi, and go train-spotting — steam locomotives are still in everyday operation in this part of the world. Whatever your tastes, you'll find something suitable in Heilongjiang.

Translated by He Fei

Anti-clockwise from top: On the skilift (by Liu Xiangyang), returning with the kill (by Wang Jian), red-crowned crane (by Wang Xinlin), duck hunters (by Liu Xiangyang), anglers breakfast on their catch (by Gao Shan), and a Korean welcome (by Jin Zhiyong).

HEILONGJIANG PROVINCE IMP. & EXP. CORPORATION

Brief Introduction

Heilongjiang Import & Export Corporation, founded with the approval of China's Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and Trade, is a provincial company. It has five departments, as well as offices in Shenzhen and Dalian.

Our company has been developing steadily ever since its establishment, undertaking business independently and acting as an import and export agency. We also handle economic and technological cooperation, and have set up some joint-venture enterprises abroad. We have established wide business relations and enjoy a good reputation. We are now actively striving to create favourable conditions for the building up of a comprehensive company.

We persist in conforming to the 'open-door' policy and we tap the potential and resources of our company to accelerate the development of trade between Heilongjiang and countries and regions throughout the world.

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Vice-presidents: Sun Weigen Tel: (0451) 220843
Dong Xuezeng Tel: (0451) 225342

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Coloured Sheeting Dept. (Tel: 354450)

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Deputy General Manager: Liu Wubo, Yan Bo, Gu Shuiqiao
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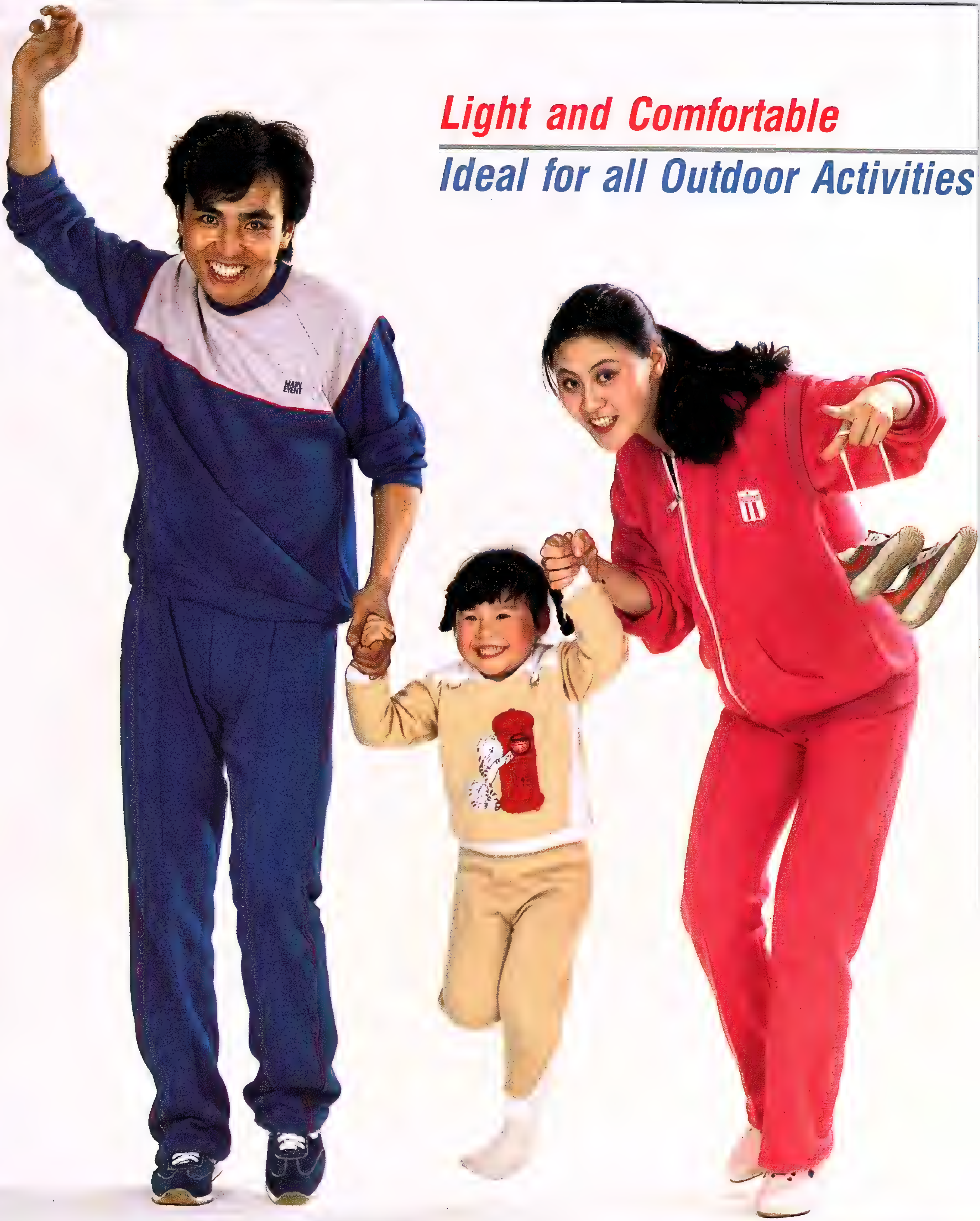
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Fishing Village of Persistent Traditions

PHOTOS BY LIN JIAN
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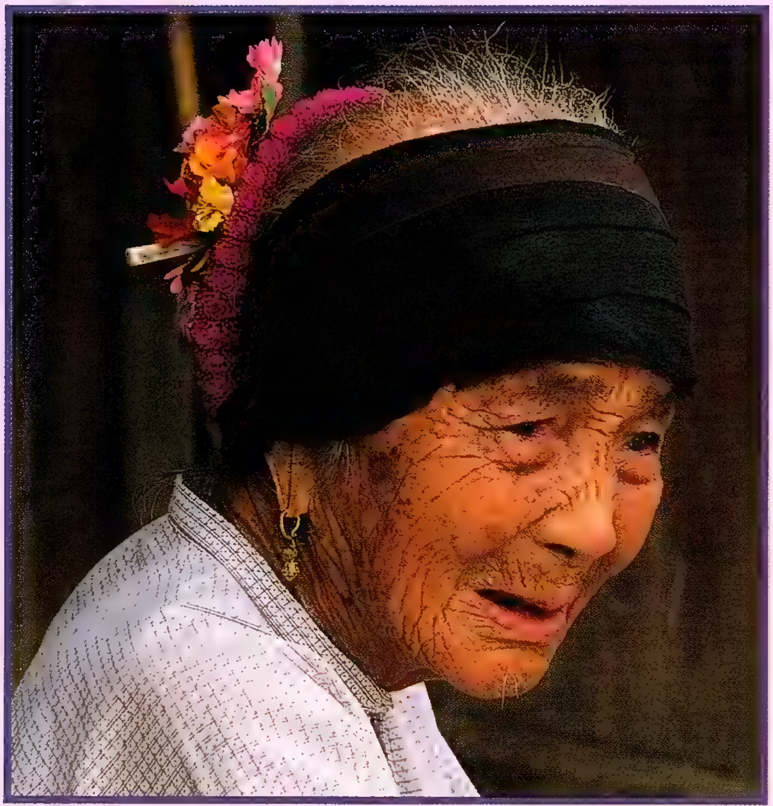
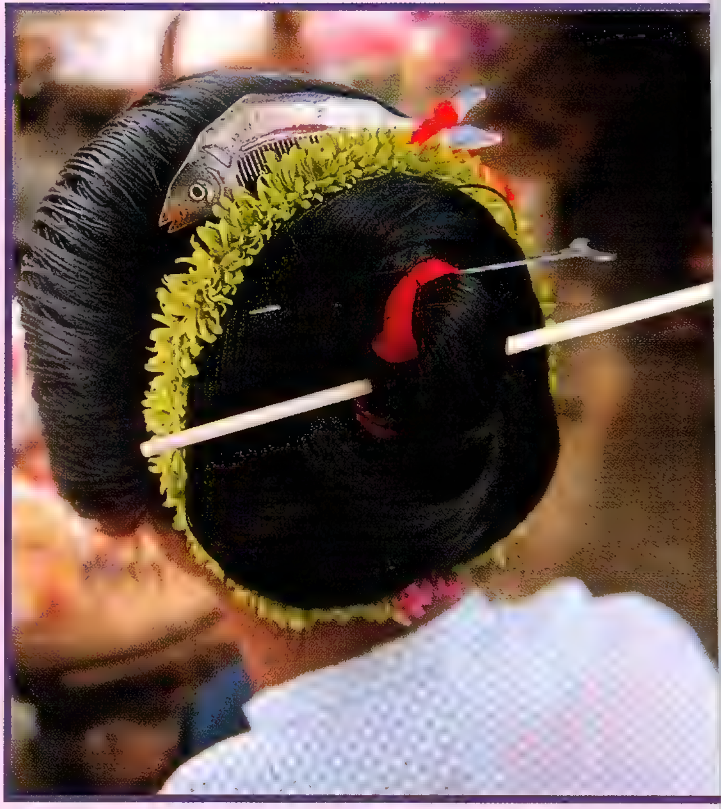
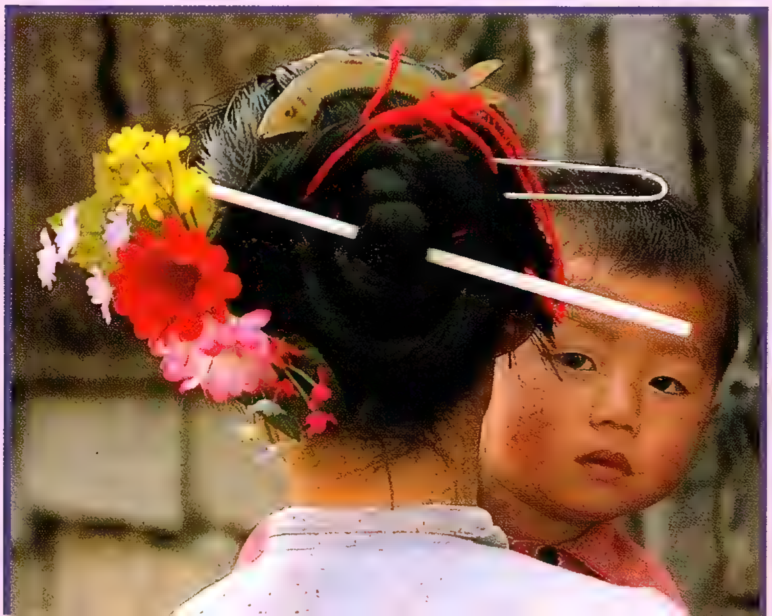
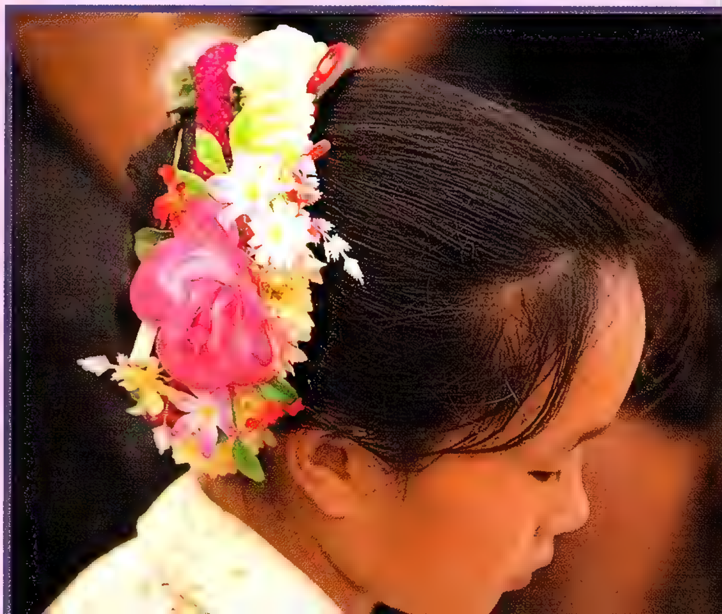
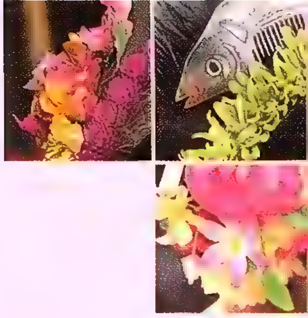


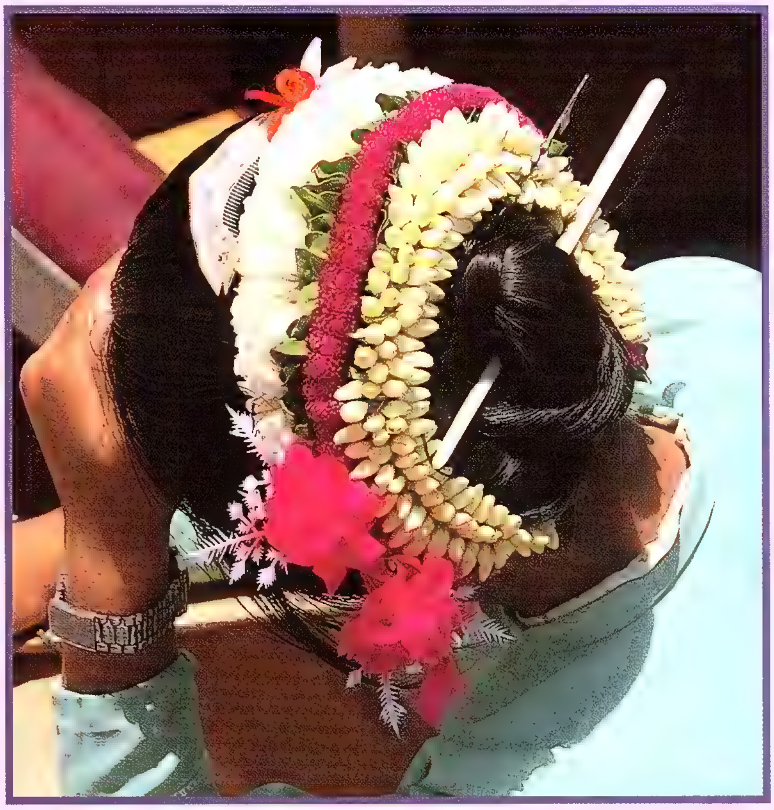


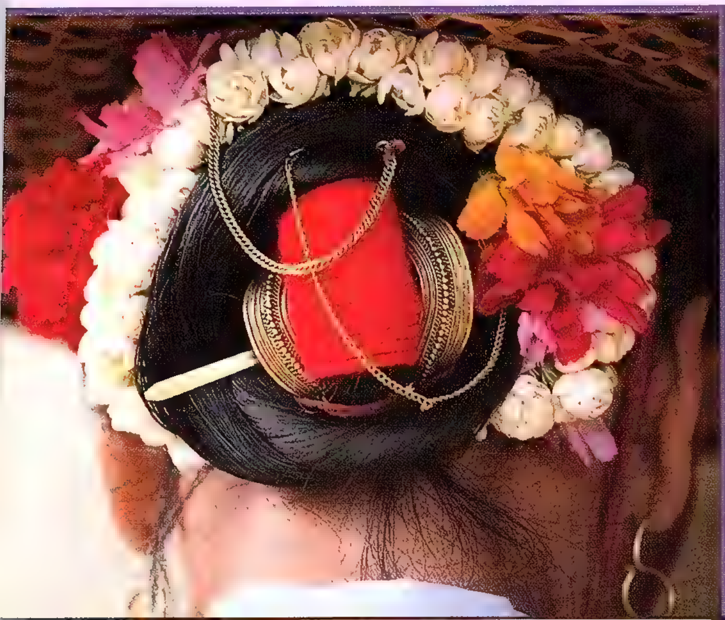


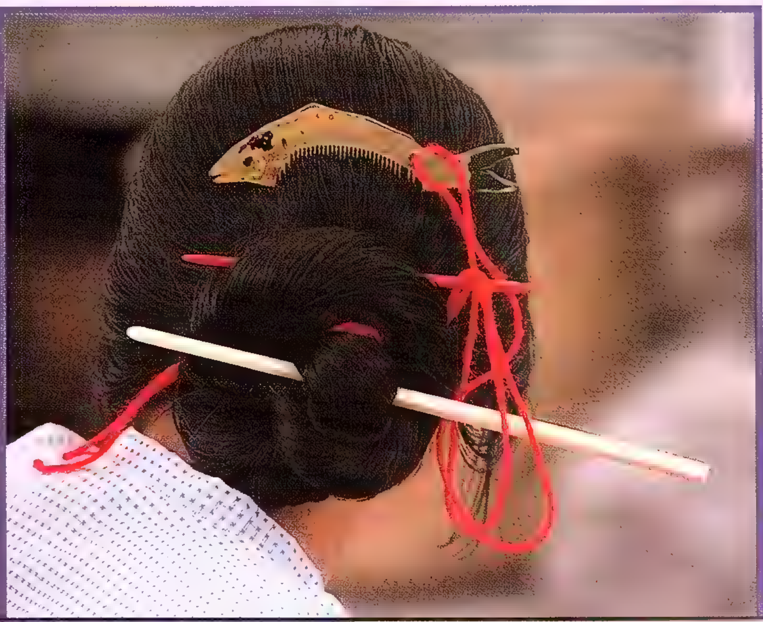


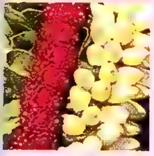


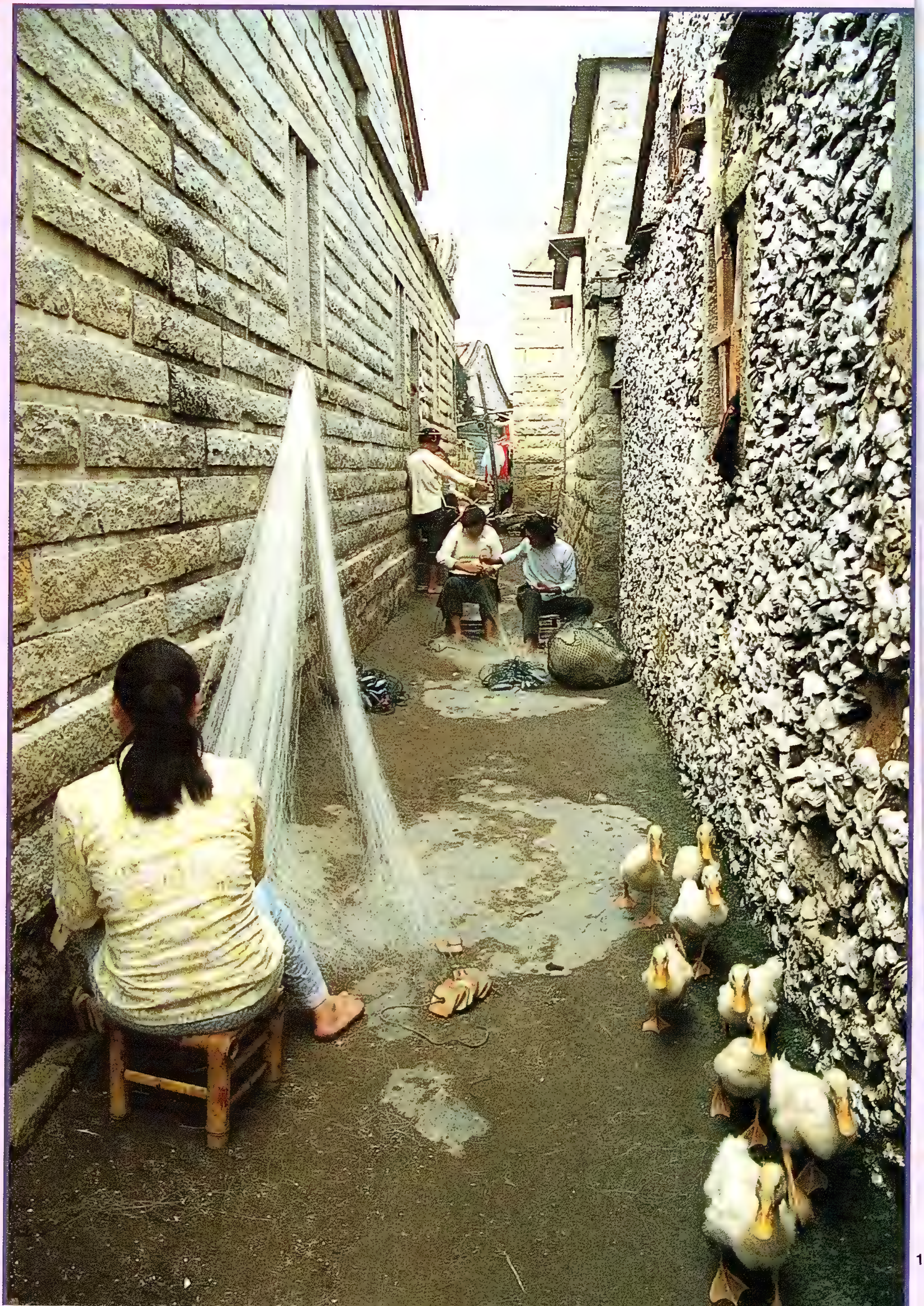
Examples of Xunpu women's floral ornaments (bottom left photo by Zhang Yu) in a village where oysters are all-important.











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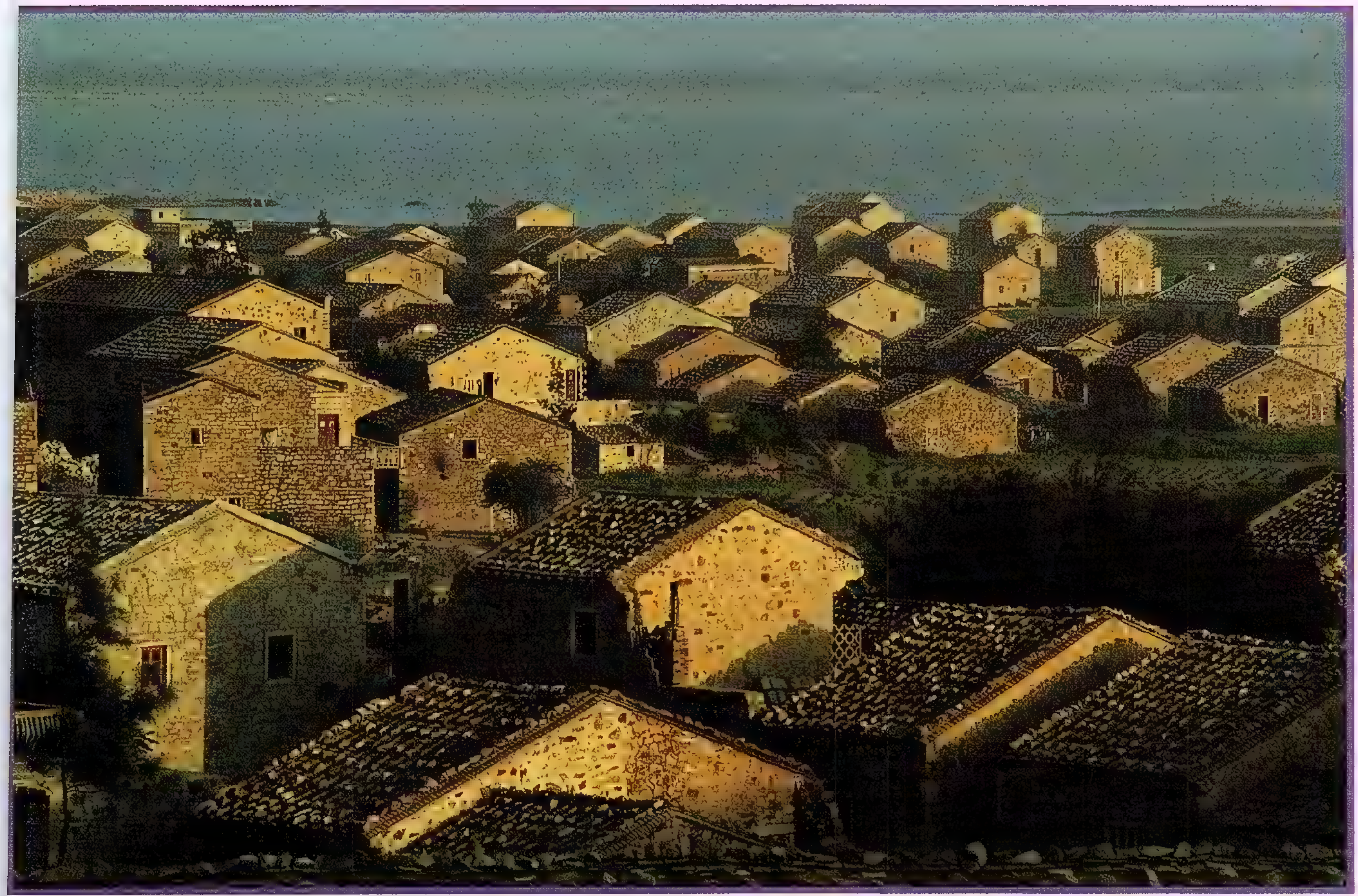


2

Rising on the northern slope of the Daiyun (Cloud-Carrying) Mountains northwest of Quanzhou in Fujian Province, the River Jinjiang runs down past that city before emptying itself into the East China Sea. In its estuary, eight kilometres south of Quanzhou, there is a tiny fishing village by the name of Xunpu.

Coquetry at Any Age

Every day at first light you can already see the women of the village riding along on their bicycles with two huge baskets full of Xunpu oysters slung one on either side of the baggage carrier. They are off to the markets of Quanzhou.

These women – known familiarly to the other residents of the Quanzhou area as 'Xunpu females' – make a remarkable sight. Their blouses are generally sewn from fine gingham or a fabric with a tiny overall floral design, and the cut is traditional.

But their most eye-catching feature is the way they dress their hair, and this applies to women of all ages. It is twisted up into a bun or chignon, often fastened with strands of red wool, and set off by a garland or two of dozens of chrysanthemum, jasmine or magnolia buds. The flowers are generally fresh, but artificial posies are also – probably inevitably – making an appearance. Some women even skewer their bun with an ivory chopstick or silver needles, or add a decorative comb (usually fish-shaped) to enhance the effect.

Though it is not even ten kilometres away from the trading port of Quanzhou, a city open to the outside world, Xunpu still preserves its old traditions – something rare and estimable today.

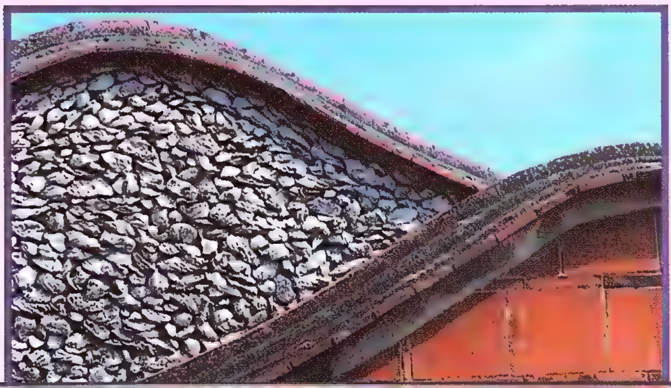
Historical Puzzle

When quizzed about the origin of the Xunpu hairstyle, most local people disclaim any knowledge. But Quanzhou, founded in 711, was the world's second largest port for a very long time during the Song and Yuan dynasties (960-1368) and continued to be important until its harbour was allowed to silt up in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) when its place was taken by Xiamen. Over the centuries, it attracted merchants, envoys and missionaries from faraway Persia, Arabia, India and Europe. Some people therefore believe that the inhabitants of Xunpu may be descendants of foreign immigrants. In other words, the flowered hairstyle could be the result of an exotic foreign influence, an imported custom.

Those who hold this view further point out that the nearby village of Yuanlu, which is a flower-growing centre (most of the fresh flowers worn by Xunpu women originate in its nurseries and gardens), was a private garden belonging to a Quanzhou superintendant of maritime trade at the time of the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368). This person was an Arab by origin, whose name in Chinese is rendered as Pu Shougeng. The interesting thing is that the surname of most of Yuanlu's residents is Bu (a homophone of Pu), so there is a distinct possibility that they might be descended from this Yuan-dynasty official. By analogy, a similar history might lie behind the customs of Xunpu.

But Xunpu women are not too interested in all this speculation. Every day, when the flower vendors from Yuanlu descend on the village with their fragrant purple, yellow, pink and white loads on shoulder poles, the women happily buy ready-made garlands and circlets until their heads resemble a miniature flower-bed.

In Xunpu (2), the narrow alleys where the women do most of their work (1) contain many examples of oyster-shell-cladding for extra protection against the elements (3, by Li Shixiong).



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'Land of Oysters'

This fishing village is celebrated for its oysters; the fried young oysters which are such a tasty and well-known delicacy of Quanzhou actually come from Xunpu. The muddy estuary of the Jinjiang offers the perfect environment for oysters. As you wander in the village, your nostrils are frequently assailed by the strong fishy smell borne on the sea breeze.

One of the local peculiarities is that the outer walls of many of the houses in this 'land of oysters' are studded with empty oyster shells collected from the beach. Not vulnerable to weathering, the shells make a surprisingly good heat insulator. Newer homes in the village, however, are built of either brick and stone or cement, and the houses which use oyster shells as an external cladding are thought to be at least a hundred years old.

In the past, a village such as Xunpu would have developed in a haphazard, unplanned fashion, and most of the houses are crammed together with very little space in between for streets. Threading our way through the labyrinth of alleys, we saw many women sitting on low stools outside their houses, cleaning and mending nets or opening oysters. On going closer, we found the latter operation was performed with the silver needle that forms part of their hair adornment! A Xunpu girl is taught how to open oysters by her mother at the age of three or four and soon starts to help with the work. After marriage at around twenty, she will continue to take oysters to Quanzhou to sell in the market. You could say that most of her lifetime is spent with the shellfish.

Life of the Past

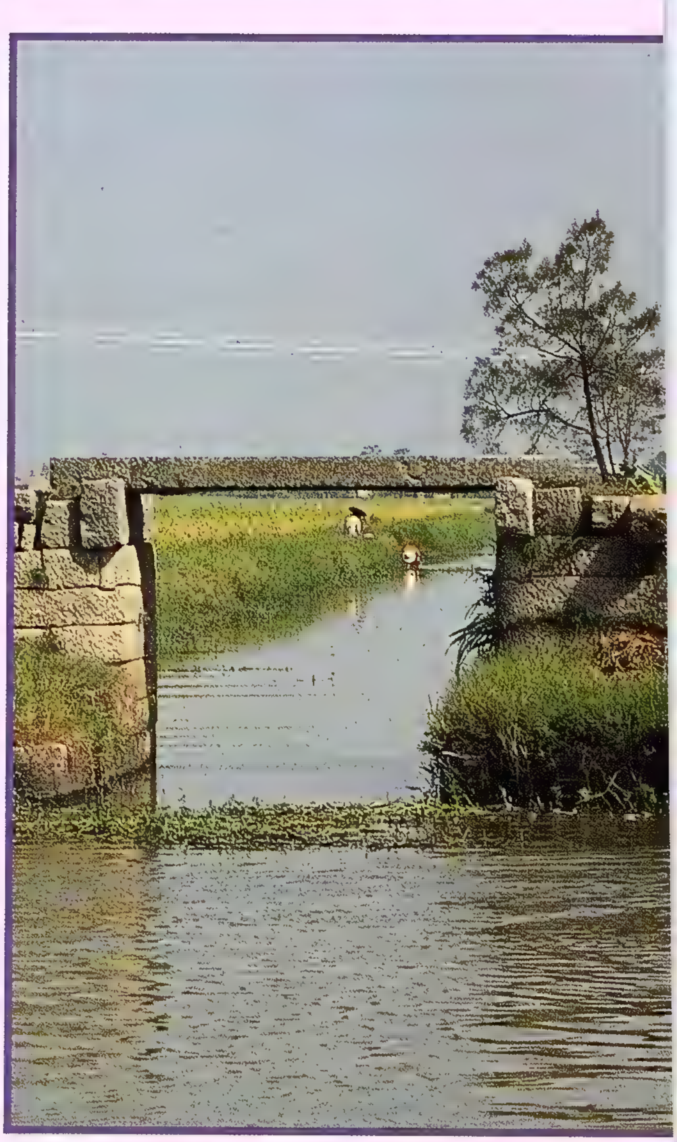
Life in Xunpu was apparently hard in the old days. The staple diet used to be based on something called *jitikou*. This was the residue from sweet potato which was kneaded into a ball and then dried. When it was needed for food, it was soaked thoroughly in water for a day then pounded with might and main with a stone pestle and mortar the next morning before it was fit to be cooked. Its name – which means, literally, 'cock's crow paste' – comes from the fact that it used to be the housewife's task to do the pounding at first light.

Today, such hardships are a thing of the past. Although still far from affluent, the villagers have reclaimed land from the sea, and the state of their fields seems to indicate good crop yields. During the slack season, every household can now afford to chip in to raise money to hire an opera troupe from the city to entertain them for a couple of evenings every so often.

Included in the programme when we were there was a traditional piece entitled *Chen San and Wu Niang* which seemed an old favourite with the villagers. The story tells of a young fellow by the name of Chen San who disguises himself as a mirror-maker, hoping thus to gain an opportunity to become acquainted with the beauty, Wu Niang; finally, of course, he succeeds in persuading her to elope with him. This local Quanzhou opera variant is sung in the local dialect, like that of Chaozhou in eastern Guangdong – to which it is related – and, just as in the latter, the clown plays a pivotal role. Whatever the reasons, it seems to be very much to the taste of these hardworking fisherfolk of Xunpu.

Matchmakers Still in Demand

Tired and thirsty after walking around in the village, we stopped at a small shop to buy bottles of soda water. Chatting with the shop owner as we drank, we learned that the daughter of a local family was getting married that very day. Even as we talked, the noise of firecrackers started up at the eastern end of the village. Hurriedly,



Fertile reclaimed land (1). The people of Xunpu can hardly wait for the opera performance to start (2 and 3).

2

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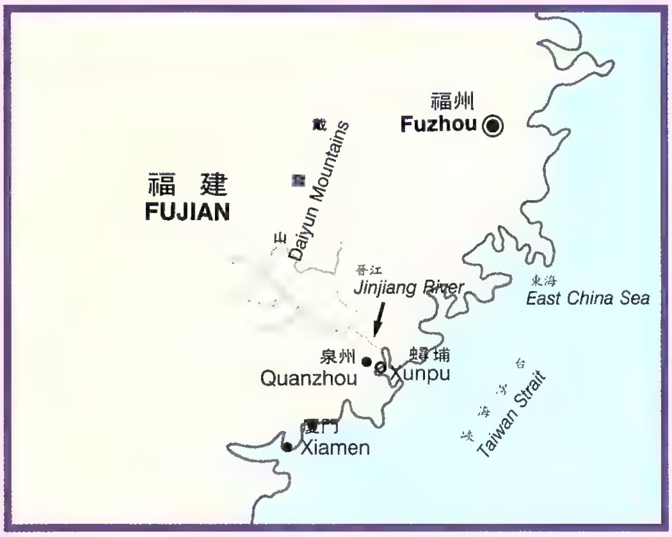
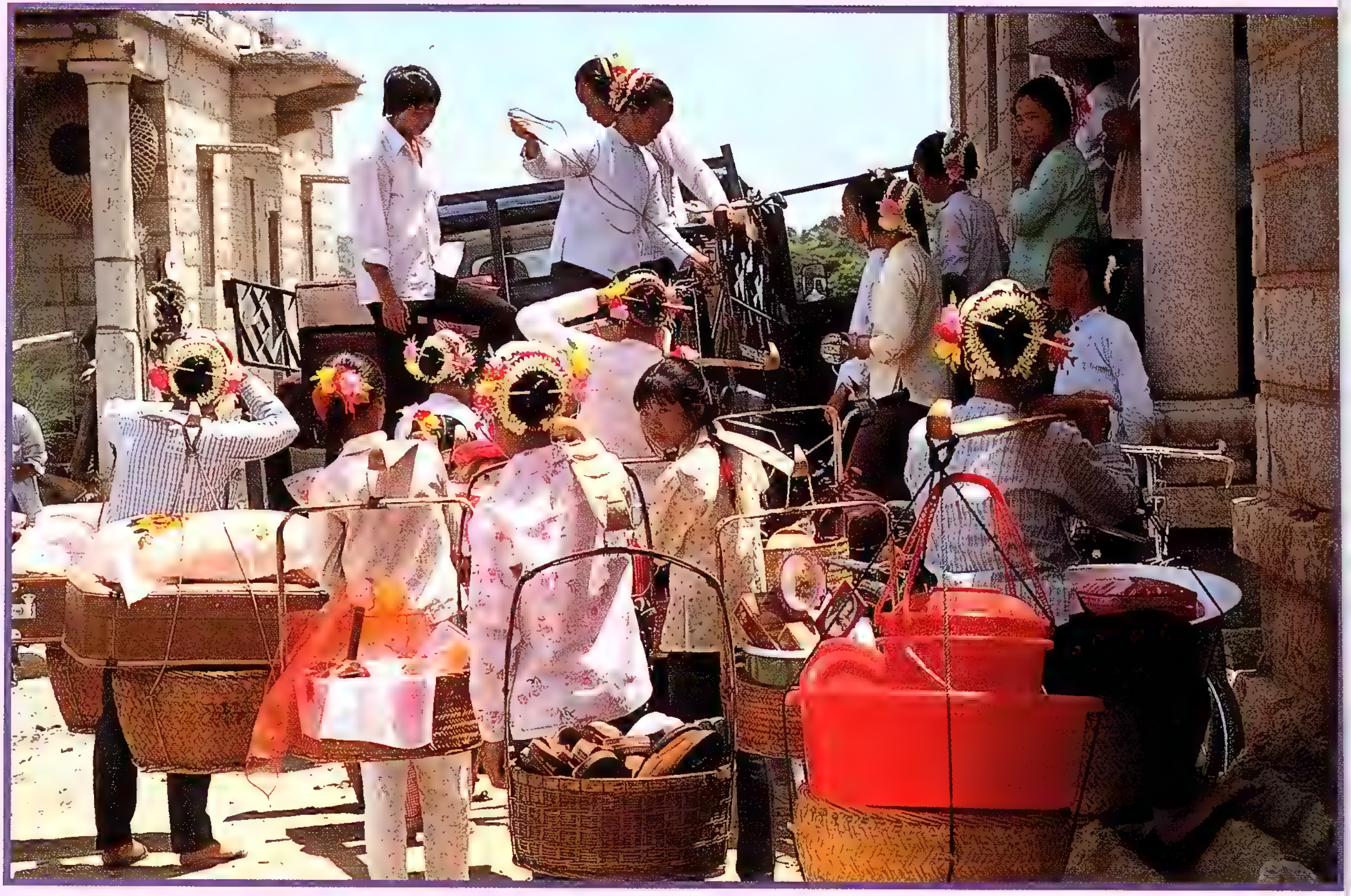

福州
Fuzhou
戴雲山
Daiyun Mountains
福 建
FUJIAN
晋江
Jinjiang River
東海
East China Sea
泉州
Quanzhou
蟳埔
Xunpu
厦門
Xiamen
台湾海峡
Taiwan Strait



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leaving our soda water unfinished, we ran off in the direction of the sounds.

The bride was sitting up very straight and correct in a jeep outside her house, ready to set out. She was dressed in a yellow outfit, very plain and without ornamentation, not even with a flower on the chest as custom dictates. Apparently, she herself had requested a simple wedding. The elderly woman seated next to the driver was pointed out as the matchmaker.

We were told that, in the villages around Xunpu, marriage is considered a matter of prime importance. Even if it is a love match, the young man must still ask a matchmaker to approach his girlfriend on his behalf when it comes to proposing. There is at least one professional matchmaker for every two or three villages, and there is nothing these usually elderly women will not do in connection with marriage. Apart from proposing for the prospective bridegroom, they run backwards and forwards between the families involved and make all the arrangements for the wedding ceremony; in short, they have a hand in everything from beginning to end.

A Massive Dowry

The bride's family had had several hundred nosegays prepared for the relatives and friends who came to see her off. There was also a number of freshly garlanded bridesmaids who, to our surprise, were each burdened with a shoulder pole. As the party set off, closer examination revealed that their loads consisted of the bride's dowry. The objects included such major items as bicycle, washing machine, bathtub, wardrobe – even a three-piece suite of matching armchairs and sofa! It looked more like a house-moving than a bridal procession. . . .

In fact, because of the narrowness of the streets, access for larger vehicles is difficult and sometimes impossible. This is why it is common practice in Xunpu for the bridesmaids to carry the entire dowry on shoulder poles from the bride's home to that of her husband. Today,

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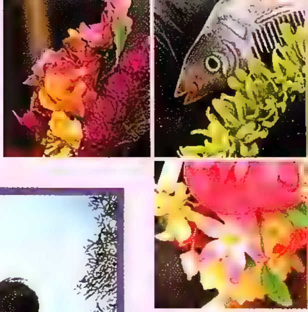


however, proved an exception. Since the bridegroom lived far away in the hills, the bridesmaids only needed to transport the goods to the other end of the village where a lorry was waiting to take over the task.

General Mourning the Norm

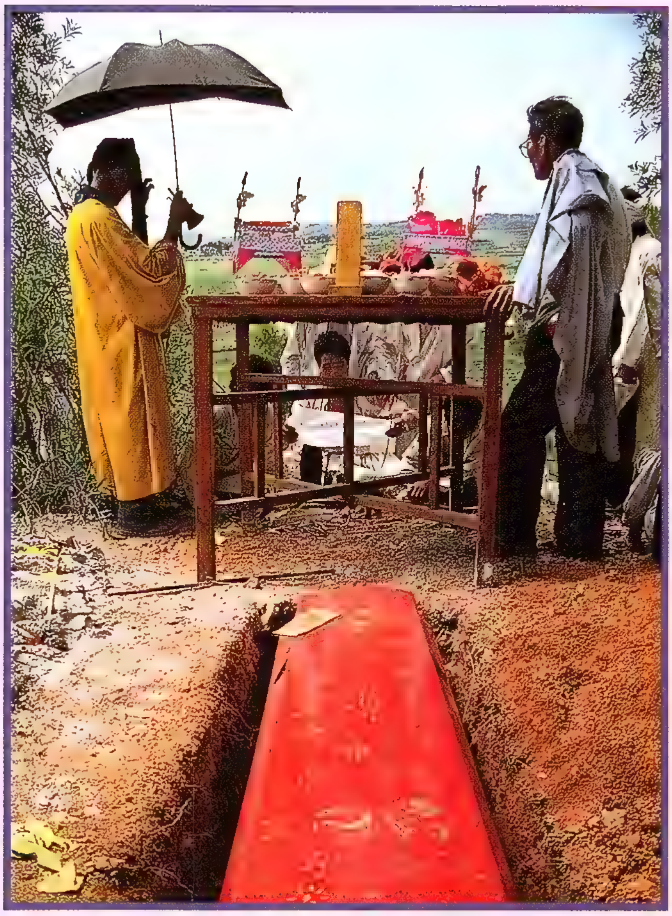
Several days later, fascinated by the atmosphere of the place, we returned to Xunpu, this time for a rather different occasion.

According to local custom, when someone dies, everyone in the village with the same surname as the deceased, whether related or not, must take part in the funeral mourning. Thus the procession we saw was a fairly long one. Everybody was dressed in a white shirt or blouse and had a white scarf or band on the head. For once, the women wore no flowers, although some had an ivory chopstick stuck through their bun. About two hundred people clustered round the coffin and walked slowly towards a hill outside the village. Some of the funerary objects displayed in the procession were of careful workmanship; among them was a colourful paper dragon, which one would have been excused for thinking of as suitable for a float in a gala parade if it had not been predominantly white (the Chinese colour of mourning).

Once the coffin arrived at the cemetery, it was lowered into the grave. A geomancer in the robes of a Taoist priest had set up an altar at the graveside; here the sacrificial offerings were laid out, along with streamers and banners intended to call back the spirit of the deceased. The priest chanted a dirge for the repose of his or her soul. The atmosphere was one of unabated grief. Even outsiders such as ourselves were affected by it.

Translated by Ren Jiazhen

Bridesmaids transfer the bride's dowry to a lorry at the edge of the village (1) while the matchmaker sits back, well content with her day's work (2). Swallows nest under the eaves beside an inscription proclaiming that spring is here (3). The funeral procession involving most of the village (5) ends up at the graveside for the final rites (4).



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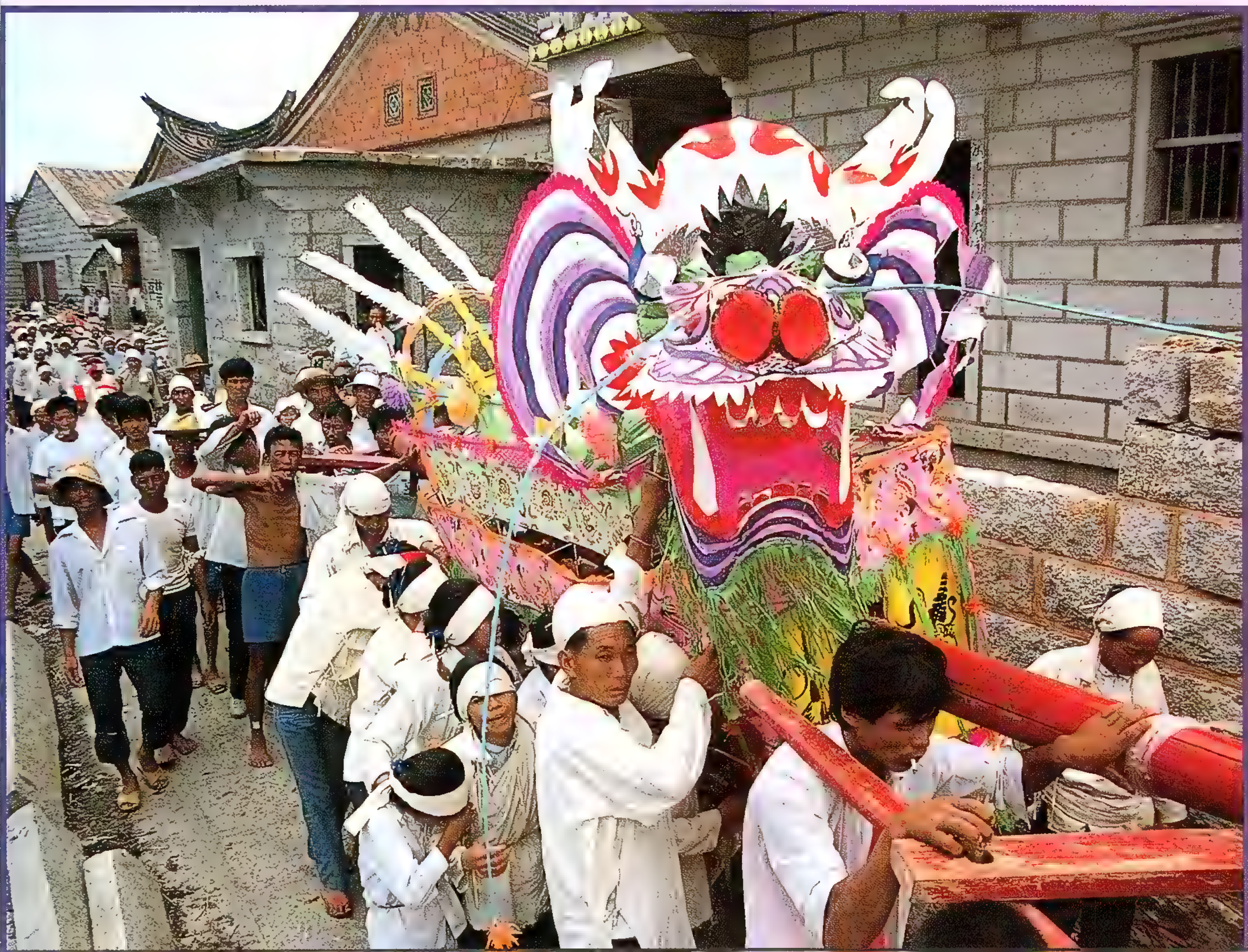

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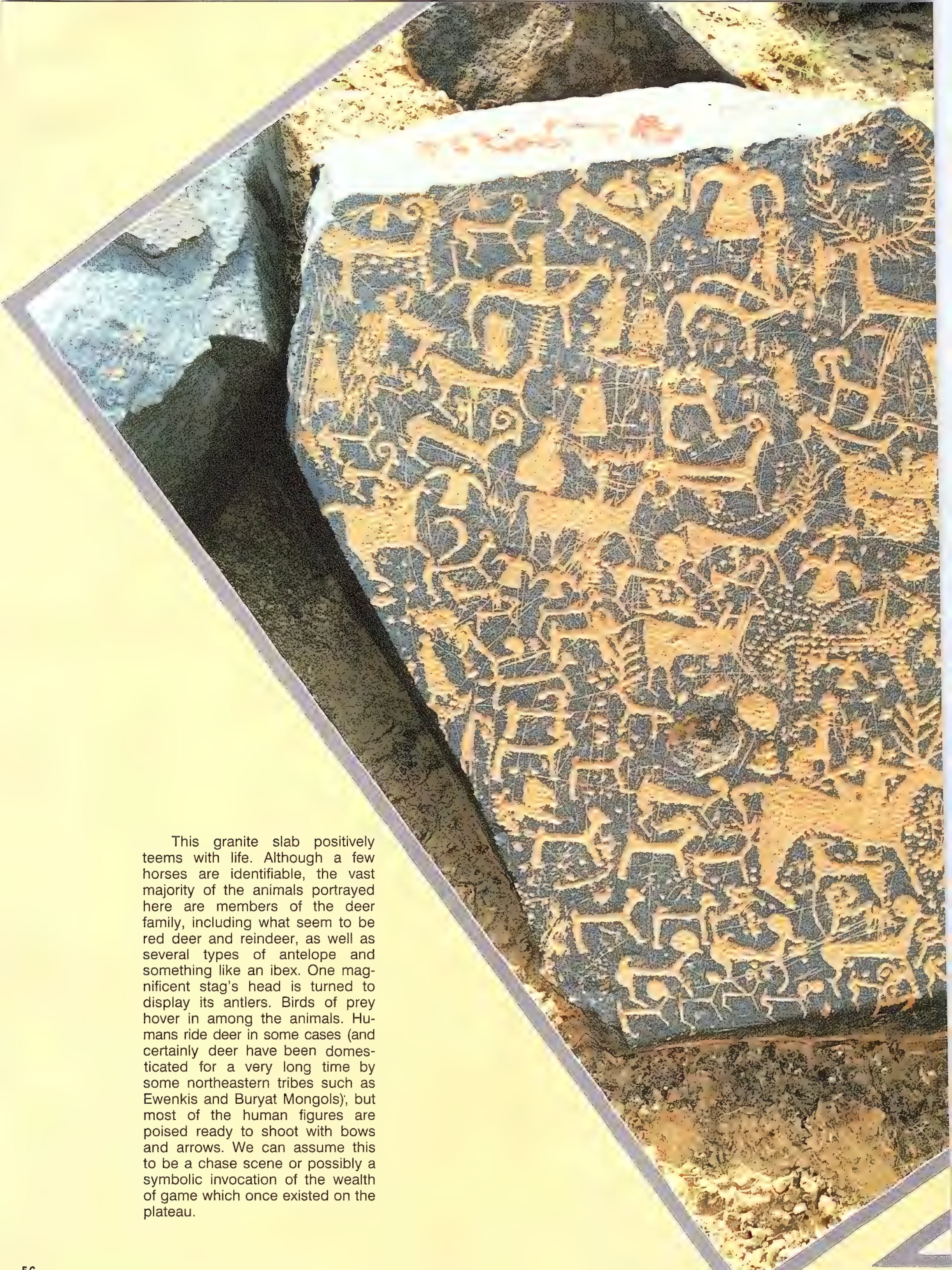
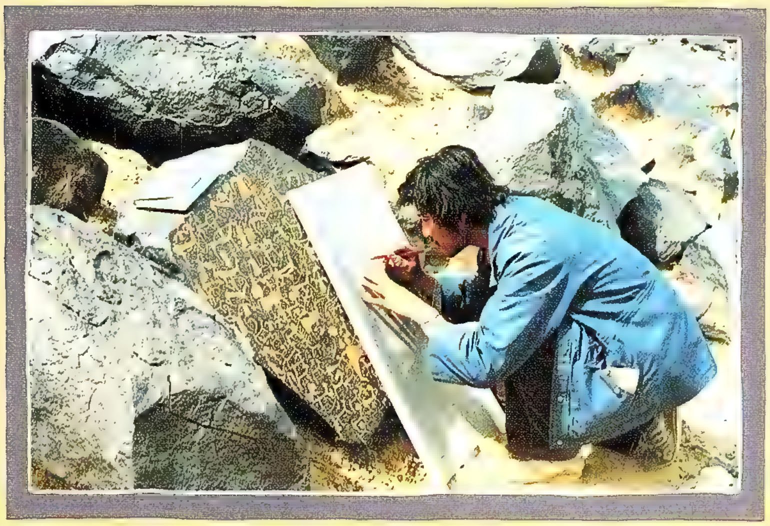
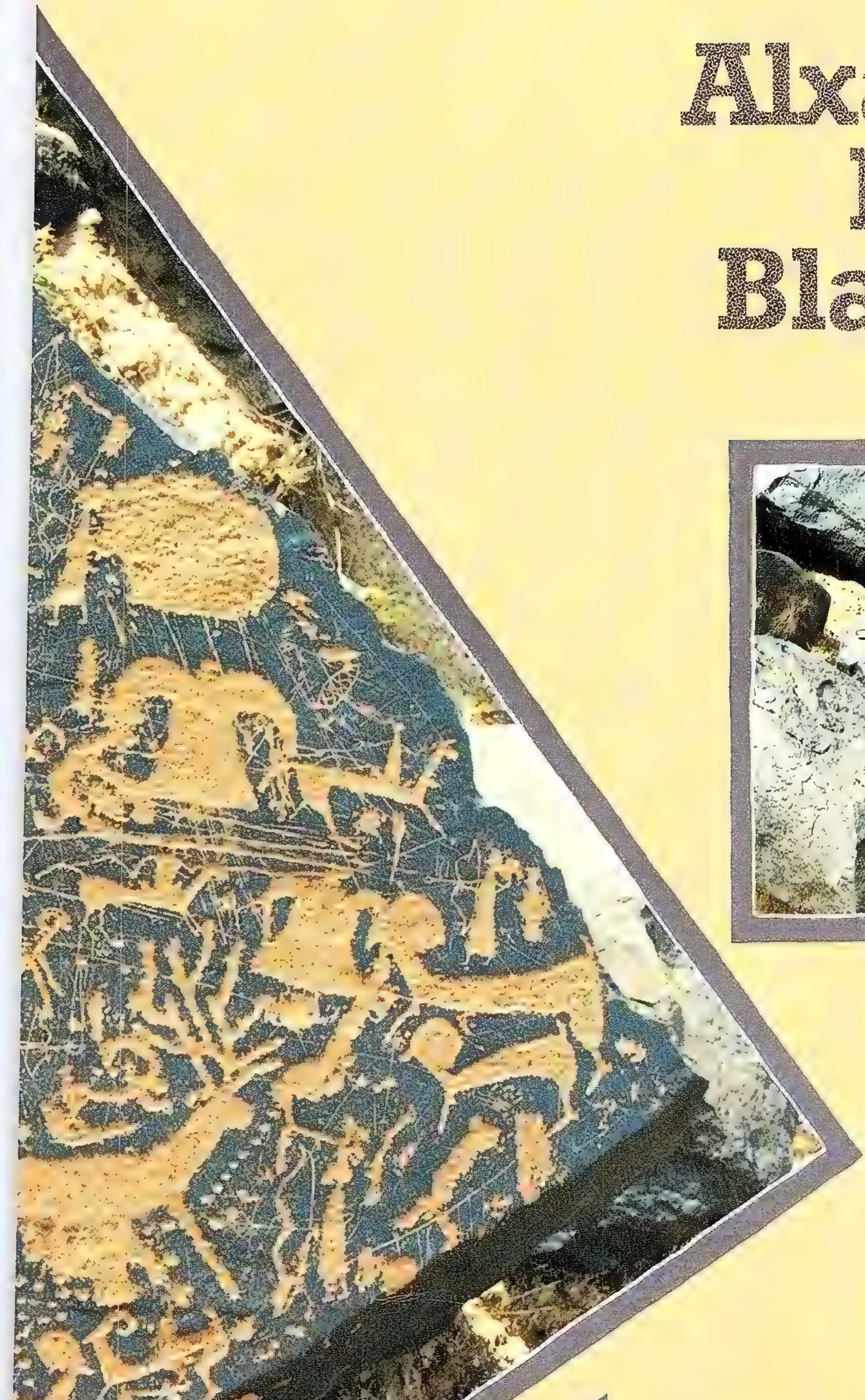


This granite slab positively teems with life. Although a few horses are identifiable, the vast majority of the animals portrayed here are members of the deer family, including what seem to be red deer and reindeer, as well as several types of antelope and something like an ibex. One magnificent stag's head is turned to display its antlers. Birds of prey hover in among the animals. Humans ride deer in some cases (and certainly deer have been domesticated for a very long time by some northeastern tribes such as Ewenkis and Buryat Mongols); but most of the human figures are poised ready to shoot with bows and arrows. We can assume this to be a chase scene or possibly a symbolic invocation of the wealth of game which once existed on the plateau.

Alxa's Ancient Pictures on Black Granite

PHOTOS & TEXT BY LI GUOQING



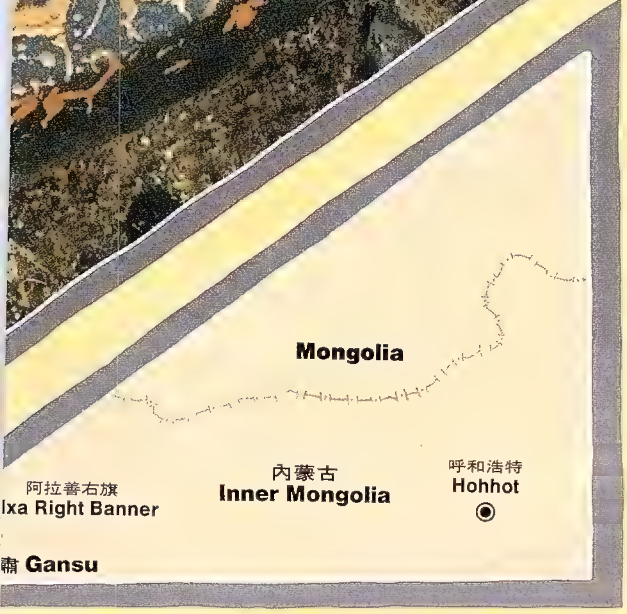


More and more data have been emerging since 1977 to swell the existing stock of knowledge about what now seems to be a broad band of ancient rock pictures and rock carvings scattered across Inner Mongolia from the Badain Jaran Desert in the far west to the Greater Hinggan Range in the northeast. Nor is this all. This band of roughly similar rock pictures also runs through Qinghai, Gansu, Xinjiang and Ningxia.

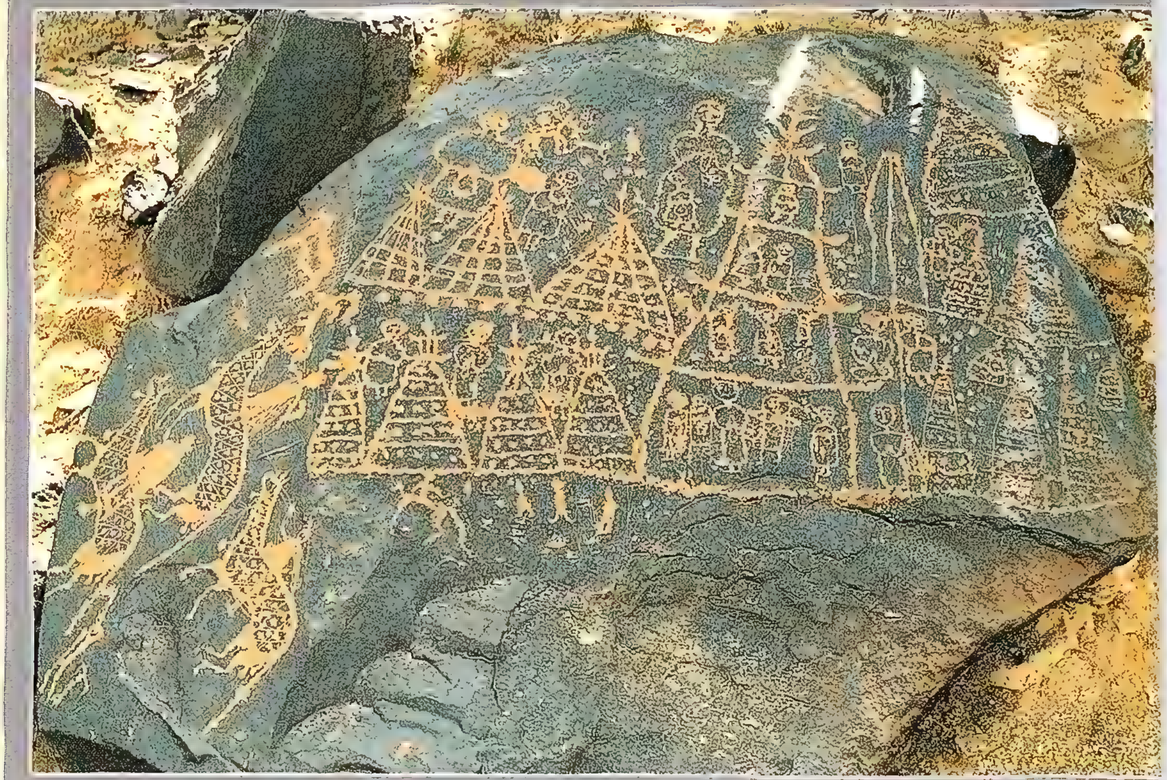
One of the many sites to throw light on the subject is located on Mount Mandalt, about fourteen kilometres from Alxa Right Banner (Ehen Hudag) on the southern fringes of the Badain Jaran Desert. Here, more than 10,000 pictures were engraved on the black granite by means of stone, bronze and iron implements over an area measuring roughly three kilometres from east to west and six kilometres from north to south.

Archaeologists have found it difficult to date their finds. However, by examining such aspects as the degree of erosion of the surface, differences in subject matter and traces of differing styles, they have concluded that the earliest rock art dates to between the Mesolithic and the Neolithic. In other words, to between 10,000 and 4,000 B.C.

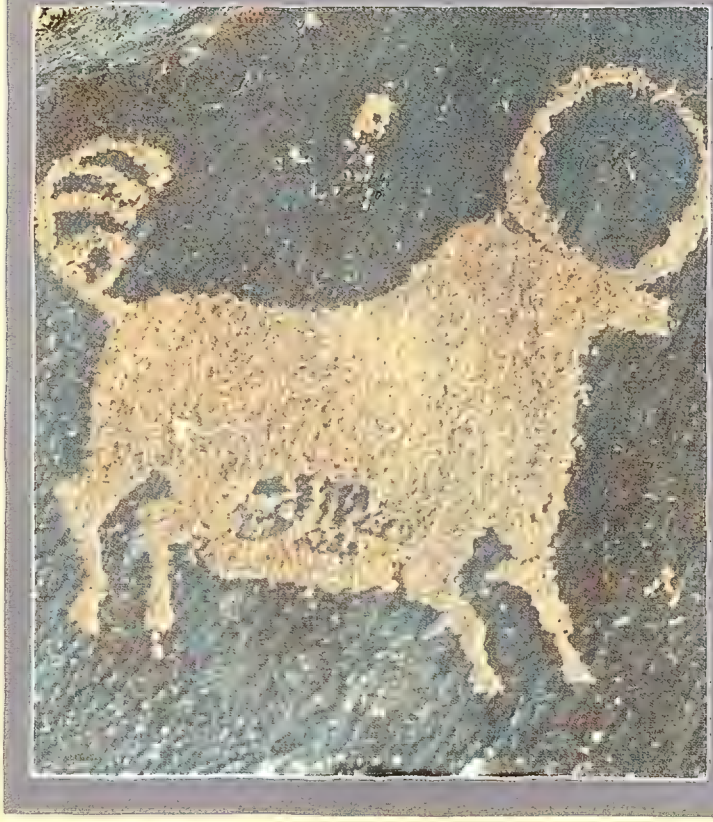
In addition, many of the rock pictures were added by nomads and other peoples throughout history, down to as recently as the nineteenth century. Works attributable to Huns, Turks, Tufa (a branch of the Xianbei), Dangxiang and Mongolians were executed over the 2,000 and more years from 475 B.C. One can identify scenes of tribesmen marching into battle, fighting, hunting, dancing, even worshipping, among many other motifs. Research continues. . . .

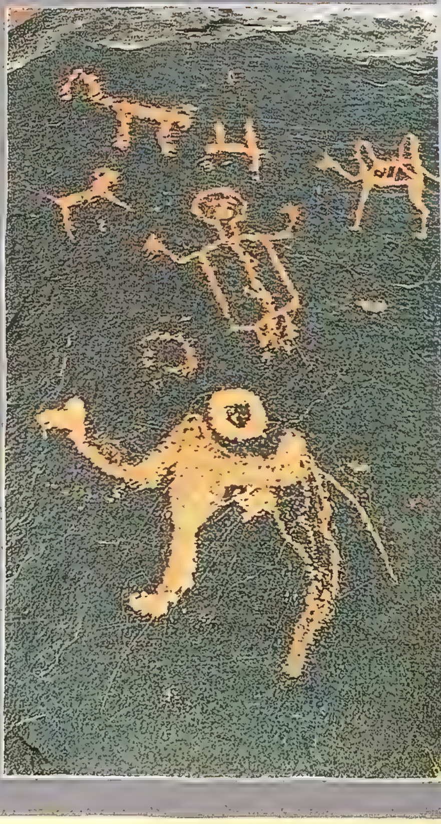


Different types of structures are represented on this 122 cm by 75 cm slab of black granite. The largest is a tower-like building four storeys high. However, those around it appear to be tents with an open top similar to the North American Indian's wigwam or the Mongolian yurt. Experts believe this particular work depicts a well-organized tribal community, possibly Mongolian or Turkic.

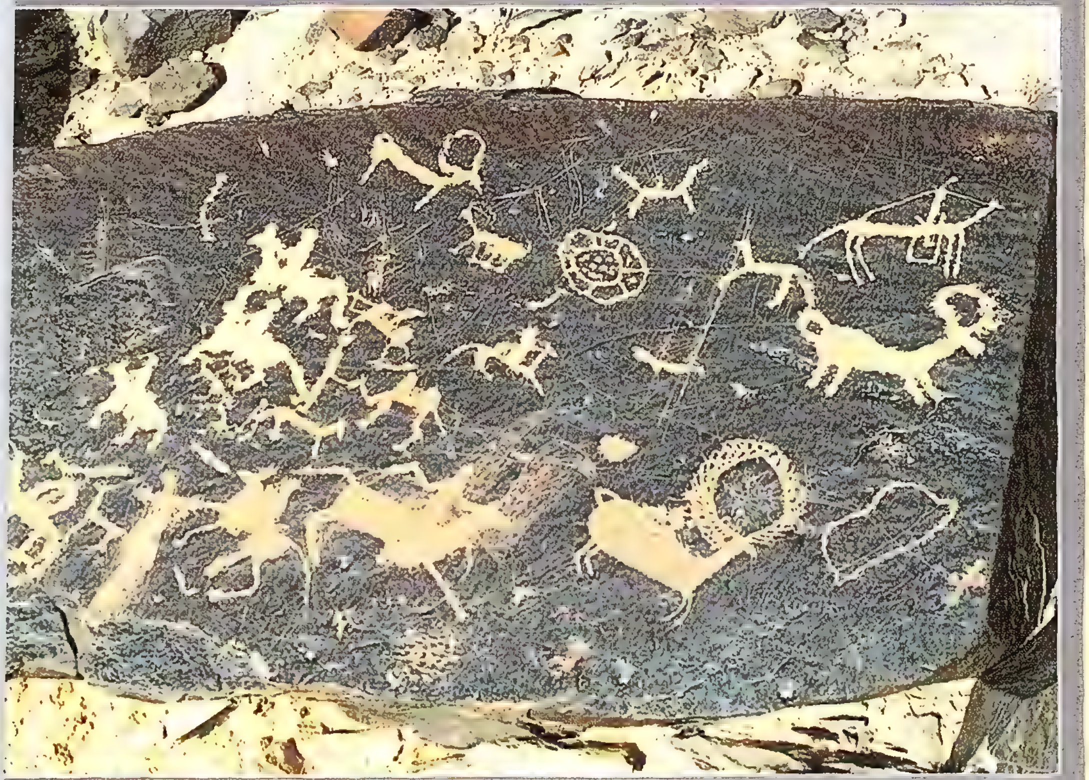


Like the ostrich and the elephant, the aurochs has long since vanished from the Alxa Plateau. Yet here, a bull with a polished body denoting its heavy coat of hair stands majestically, alone but untroubled. Its huge horns are curved inwards, forming a near perfect circle, and its raised tail is executed in four thick strokes. This seems a symbol of power.

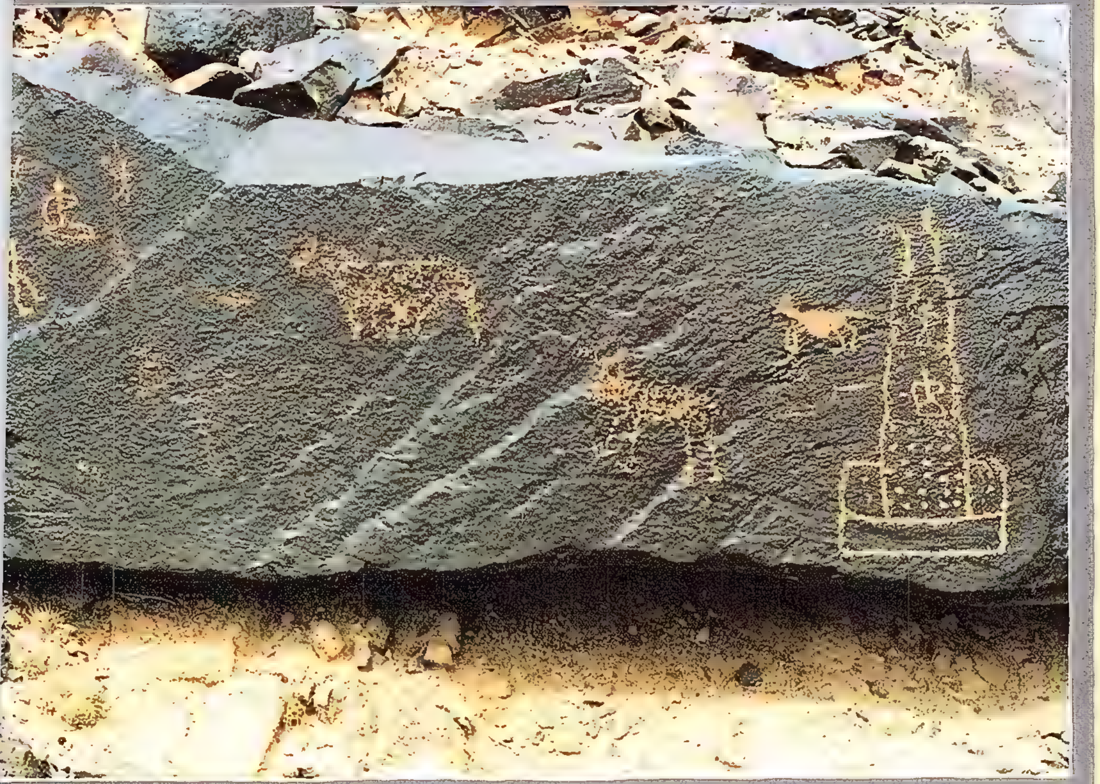




This picture portrays the age-old partnership between man and camel, an animal well-adapted to living in the desert. One of these small-headed and long-legged camels carries an unidentifiable object between its humps. In fact, camels were domesticated some two thousand years ago, and were even trained for use in battle (as they were on the Arabian Peninsula). This petroglyph proves that camels have lived on the Alxa Plateau from early times, and experts have discovered more camel pictures at this site than elsewhere in Inner Mongolia.



The round object in this picture may be a wheel, or possibly a well. Camels, sheep, horses, antelopes and dogs are among the animals featured in this lively scene, which must surely reflect a time when the Alxa Plateau was covered with lush grass and dense forests. In the foreground a mounted huntsman races at full gallop after a stag with a splendid head of antlers.

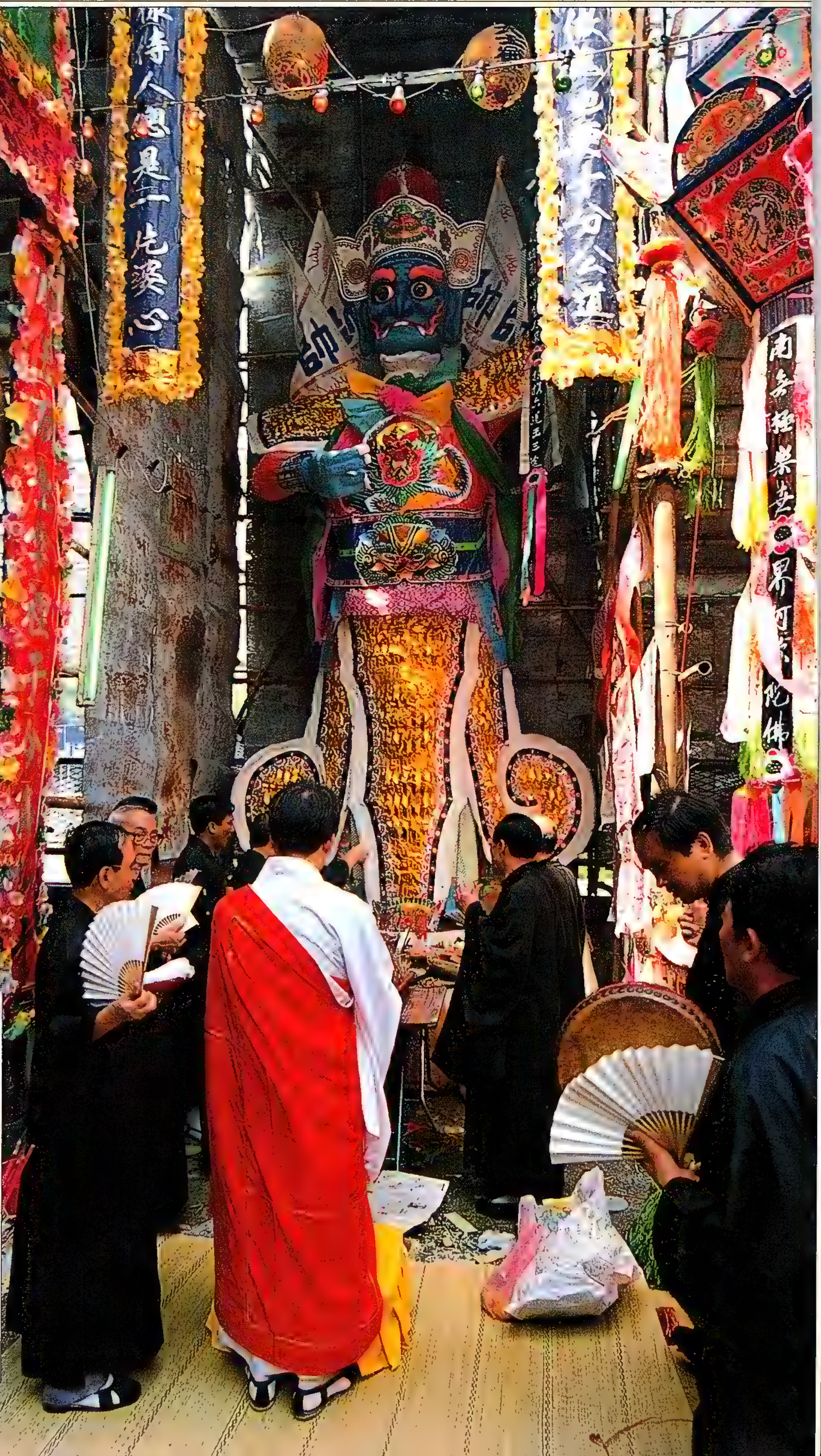


This slab of stone contains several apparently unconnected themes. The tall building could well be a stupa or other religious structure; we can identify what could be an image of a deity on one storey. Other items include a barking dog and rather primitively drawn people dancing in a circle. Could this be a religious ceremony in progress?

Translated by Ursula Yeung

HONG KONG'S HUNGRY GHOST FESTIVAL

PHOTOS & ARTICLE BY
WONG CHUNG FAI



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Despite his evident discomfort, he is determined to offer paper 'gold ingots' (1); other offerings of intricately folded paper (3). Chanting before the 'Ghost King' (2) as all the neighbourhood gathers at the scene (4, by Chan Yat Nin).

3

According to traditional folk beliefs, on the first day of the seventh lunar month the gate to the underworld is thrown open and ghosts are permitted to come back to the human world for a while to look around, to enjoy a change of food and drink, and to receive money. But on the last day of that month they must return, and hell's gate is locked up tight again. On the Western calendar, this period corresponds to August 1 to 30 1989 and August 20 to September 18 1990.

To welcome these visitors from the other world and to contribute to expiating their sins, Ullambana ceremonies are staged on a rotational basis by neighbourhood and community organizations in Hong Kong, especially by those whose members are originally from Chaozhou in eastern Guangdong. But even families who are not of Chaozhou origin burn paper money and paper clothes – often on the fourteenth day of the lunar month – as a way of remembering their deceased relatives and ensuring their comfort in the afterlife.

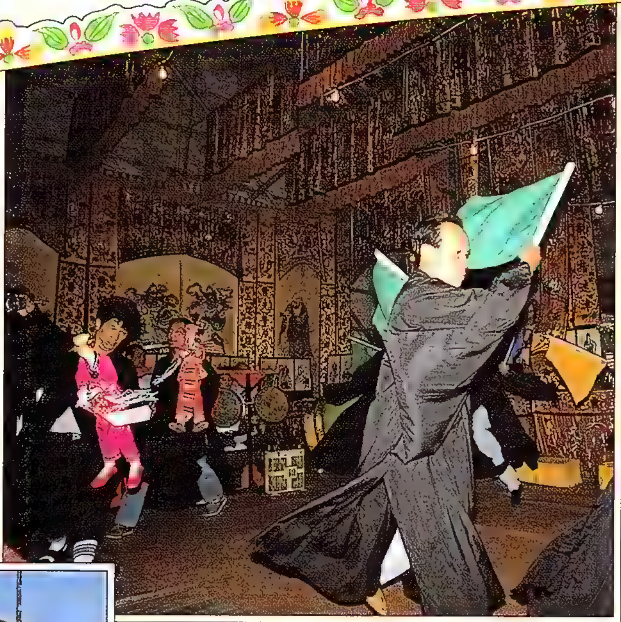
Buddhist Anecdote as Basis

The Ullambana Festival or Hungry Ghost Festival, as it is usually referred to in Hong Kong, derives from an Indian Buddhist rite. As the underlying concept coincided with the Chinese practice of cherishing the memory of ancestors and respecting tradition, the festival gained in popularity and spread with the expansion of the Buddhist religion in China, eventually becoming accepted into the general body of folk customs.

In Sanskrit, *ullambana* means 'deliverance of those hung by the feet in the underworld'. According to the Buddhist sutra which deals with this subject, Maudgalyayana, one of the ten disciples of Sakyamuni, the historical Buddha, overcame untold hardships and difficulties to visit his mother in the underworld, only to find her among the *preta* (hungry ghosts). This placed her in a horrible predicament; whenever she took food into her mouth to eat, it burst into flames. Eager to save his mother but unsure how to do so, Maudgalyayana approached Sakyamuni for ideas. The sage told him that when it was time for the monks to end their *varsika* (retreat for study and meditation during the three-month rainy season in the summer), that is, on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month, he should have large platters of fresh fruit and dried nuts prepared for them in order to expiate the sins of the hungry ghosts. Thus Maudgalyayana's mother too was delivered from her plight.

After the Ullambana Sutra was translated into Chinese in the third century, devotees began to offer fresh fruit and dried nuts at a festival on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. It is said that this practice was already popular in China by the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589). Evidence for this is provided by the *Family Teachings of Mr Yan*, a book written between 550 and 577 during the Northern Qi period, which states that by the middle of the seventh month plates of sacrificial offerings could be seen.

Taoists also had a ceremony to atone for



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the sins of the deceased which happened to fall on the very same day. In essence this hardly differed at all from the Buddhist festival. In the course of time, the two merged into one, incorporating both Buddhist and Taoist elements, as do so many folk festivals.

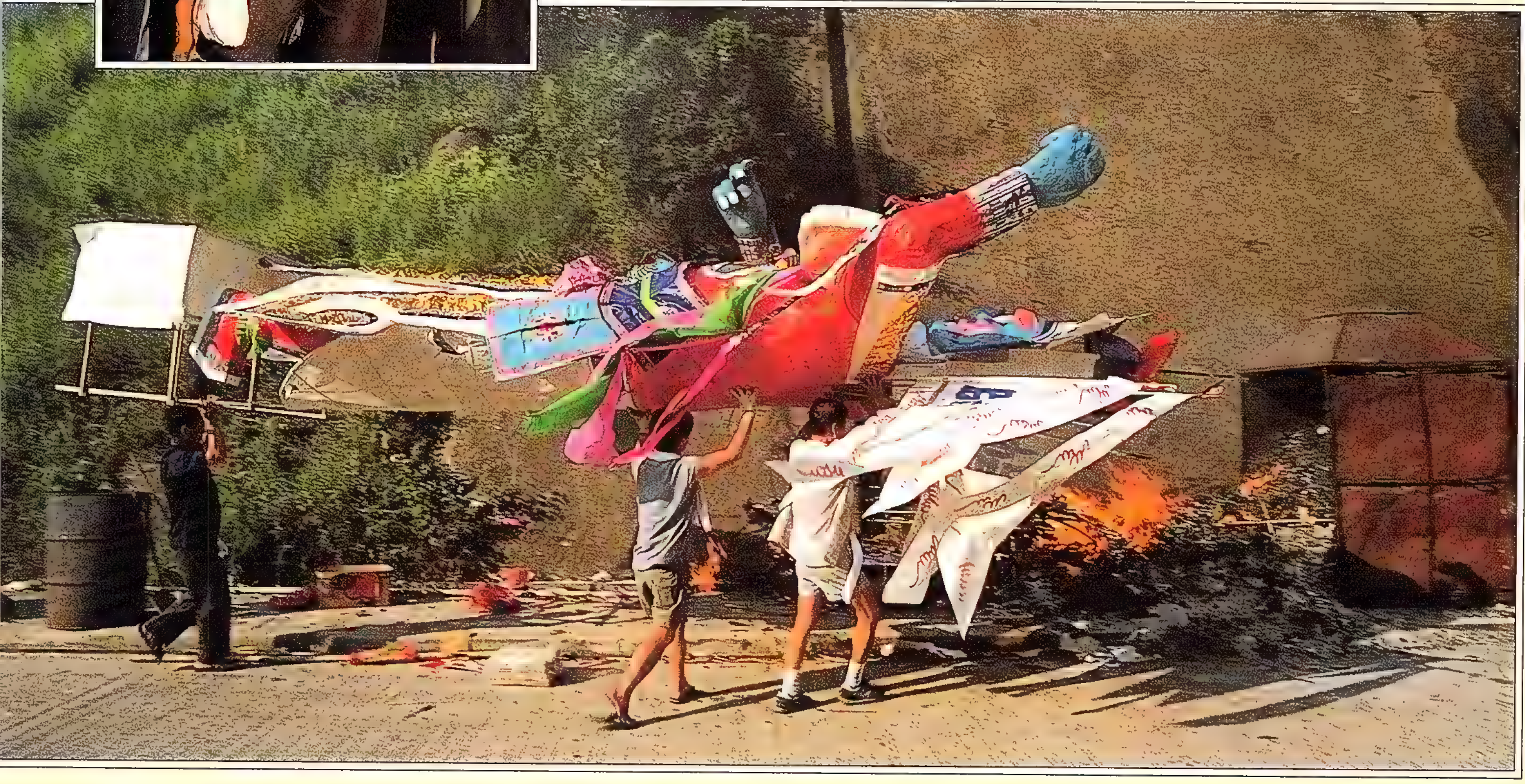
Open to One and All

On the evening of the thirteenth day of the seventh lunar month I went to a public playground at Hung Hom on the eastern side of the Kowloon Peninsula. It was brilliantly lit with colourful lights and there was a band playing in the centre of the open space, while bamboo shelving holding decorated paper shrines had been set up on both sides. Two huge white lanterns bearing red characters meaning 'Ullambana Festival: Happy Life for All Familie were hung up in conspicuous positions.

The following day was the end of the thre day ceremonies at this site and also the time fo the major activities. I returned at noon an found people flocking into the playground i droves despite the scorching heat. Placin sundry offerings in front of a gigantic pape statue of the presiding deity, the 'Ghost King they wholeheartedly entered into the rite designed to bring their ancestors peace in th underworld. It is understandable that the livin wish to beg for happiness for their loved one and all lonely souls at such a time, at least onc a year. You see all sorts of people, all of them eager to participate.

While looking around the grounds, I entere a shrine packed with bottles of the best brand and cognac, electric fans, flower vases, and sundry statues, including of Guanyin, the Goddess of Mercy. All these objects had been contributed by local Chaozhou people for an auction to be held that night. In addition, I saw *dajin* ('great gold'), which is paper money in the shape of a lantern; some people say it is shaped like the lotus base on which Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are shown seated.

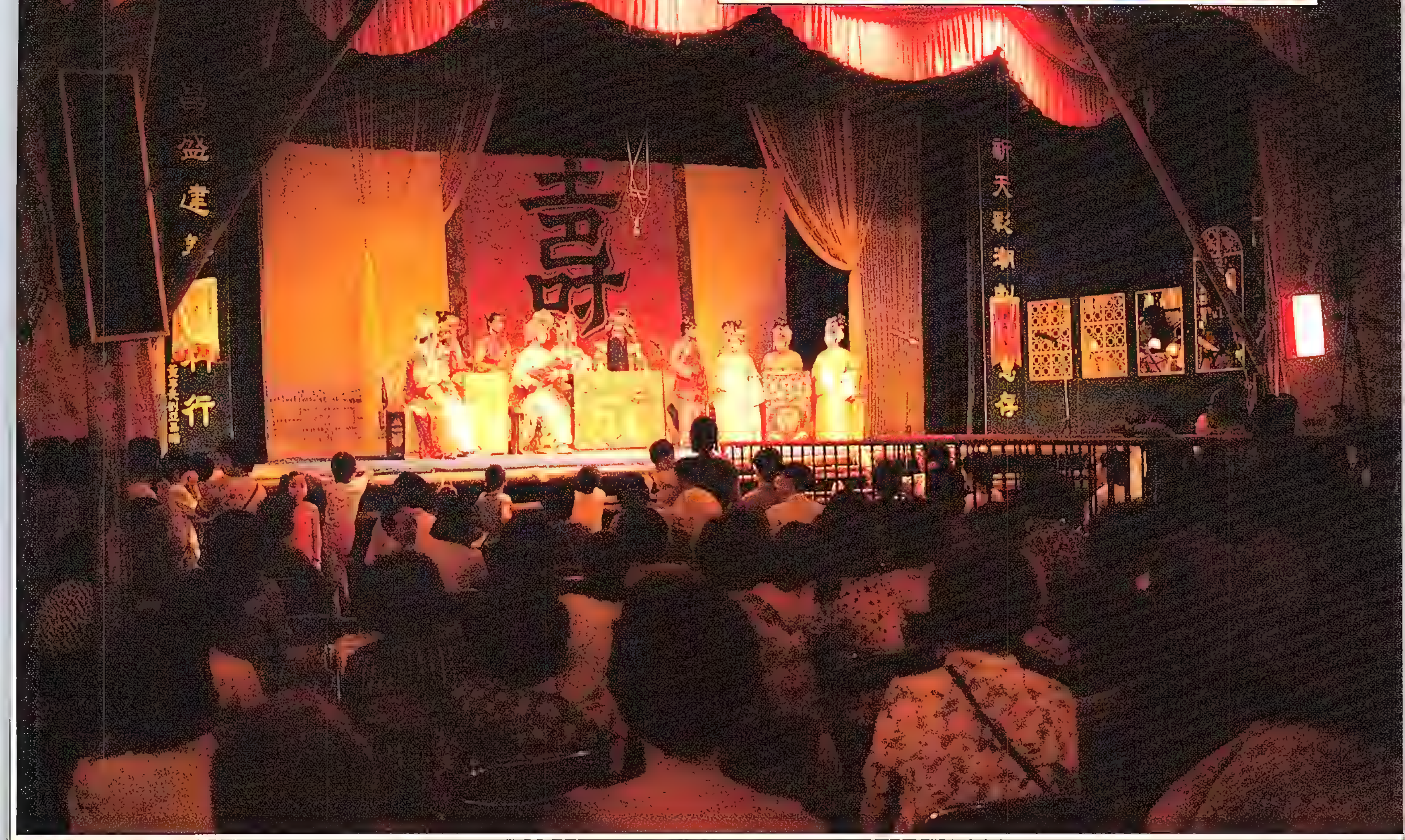
The colourful Ghost King, made of a sort of papier-mâché, was over five metres tall. Though he looked very ferocious, he is actually thought to be kind and gentle. His 'job' is to collect the offerings of incense and paper money and distribute them among the hungry, lonely ghosts. To show his quality of mercy, his head is inlaid with a tiny Guanyin.



3

Taoists console the ghosts with their dance (1) while the 'Ghost King' is reduced to ashes (3) and rice is distributed to the needy (2). The names of donors are set up for all to see (4), and the final opera performance lasts all night (5).

4



While I was there, a group of Taoists came and took up positions on either side of the Ghost King. A man wearing a red Buddhist robe came and chanted something that I was unable to understand. Later, I discovered that he had been invited specially from Tibet; presumably he was chanting in Tibetan or Sanskrit!

Auspicious Rice

Perhaps the most characteristic activity at the festival is the distribution of rice. Chaozhou people also call this the 'Festival of Alms-Giving'. They believe that, apart from offering donations to the deceased, they should also show charity to the living and give to orphans, widows and the destitute.

A theatrical production was staged to wish people long life, after which the festival organizers announced that the distribution of rice would begin. I did not join the queue for rice but stood at one side to get a better view of what was happening. I noticed quite a few people going back a second time. Obviously, not all of those hoping for a ration of rice were in need of assistance; many of them were there simply to obtain rice as a symbol of good luck and to avert evil.

Dusk fell. The offerings placed in front of the Ghost King – rice, vegetables and fruit – were distributed among the old and poor and then it was time to move the enormous effigy to the side of the playground where there was a furnace. In a short space of time the Ghost King was consigned again to the underworld, taking his leave of humankind in a mass of ashes and a puff of smoke.

At around nine o'clock in the evening even more people came to make offerings to the dead, watch the performances (originally intended to keep the wandering ghosts amused and good-humoured!) or simply have fun. The Taoists and the person from Tibet ascended the stage set aside for the rite and started chanting. Splitting into two lines, some waving flags, others holding paper figures, they paced around rapidly to the beat of drums and gongs. This continued for well over an hour and, in their heavy robes, they must have been very hot and uncomfortable.

Simultaneously, an auction was in progress at the shrine. All the bids were shouted out in Chaozhou dialect and more often than not consisted of figures with an auspicious sound or implication: favourites were HK$388 and HK$888. Successful bidders did not in fact have to pay on the spot; they were not expected to fork out until the following year, presumably to help finance the next ceremony.

As the night drew on, a huge crowd remained in front of the stage, mesmerized by the opera which was being performed. The actors and actresses seemed to grow ever more sorrowful in their singing and they were accompanied by heart-rending music. As the final item of the Hungry Ghost Festival, this would go on until early morning.

Translated by Wang Mingjie

Mountain Worship

PHOTOS BY ZHENG YUNFENG
TEXT BY SUI XUSHENG

According to a Tibetan legend, once upon a time the are now covered by the Himalayas and the Qinghai-Tib Plateau was a vast ocean. Its shores were covered with lus forests and meadows where the people and their herds, a well as a profusion of wild animals and birds, led happy ar peaceful lives.

One day a giant snake — in some versions of the sto a dragon — rose from the bottom of the sea, stirring u tremendous waves that flooded the land, sweeping away th flowers, plants and trees. Humans, birds and animals fle panic-stricken, now east, now west, seeking escape from th invading waters. Just as everything seemed lost and tot destruction inevitable, a five-coloured cloud descended fro the sky and turned into five dakinis, flying goddesses. The exerted all their magic powers to subdue the monster an restore order to the world. Expressing their undying gratitud man and beast alike begged them to stay and favour the with their presence for ever. And the compassionat goddesses consented, ordering the sea to retreat and turnin the area into mountains and high grasslands. The themselves became the five tallest peaks of the Himalayas including Mount Qomolangma (Everest).

Many of the mountains on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau ar regarded as holy by Tibetans. Kangrinboqê (Kailash) i western Tibet and the A'nyêmaqên Mountains in Qinghai ar just two examples; devotees circumambulate them, ofte performing *kjangchag,* that is, prostrating themselves ful length at every step — a pilgrimage ritual which can tak months to complete.

But Tibetans also worship their local mountain god symbolically at the piles of stones, usually known as *lhatse* which may top a pass or any eminence and sometimes ac as shrines. In June last year I witnessed a similar ritual no far from Lake Qinghai at Mount Longbusaiqing 130 kilometre west of Xining, Qinghai's capital. This seemed to be a regula annual event, and was attended purely by men.

At dawn, I set off on horseback with a couple of Tibetan guides. It took us two hours to reach the site, which lay at over 4,000 metres above sea-level. Small hillocks were strung together by a cat's cradle of ropes hung with tufts of natural wool. *Lhatse* sprouted prayer flags. Over a thousand Tibetans had gathered, throwing colourful streamers into the air as they chanted prayers.

A hundred metres to the west a tent had been erected. Six lamas stood at its entrance, holding various musical instruments. Several hundred people faced them quietly, holding their horses' reins. A loud, clear chanting was emanating from inside the tent. Then two of the monks began to blow conch horns — a signal for the crowd to kneel. Going closer, I saw that there were many monks inside the tent, which was lit with the soft glow of butter lamps. Scriptures were laid on the ground and representations of holy personages hung all around. The monks outside the tent suddenly interrupted the chanting with renewed blasts from their horns. Immediately the people rose from their knees, mounted their horses and cantered across to the altar.

The latter was a substantial platform of stones and earth about ten metres wide and two metres high which had probably been there for a very long time, as the stones were heavily weather-stained. Branches were piled up and set alight. Six Tibetans went up and placed *hata* (silk ceremonial scarves), streamers, precious stones, medicinal herbs, food, etc., on the altar and sprinkled it with wine and butter tea. A couple of monks then took up a position with their backs to the altar, facing the *lhatse* and the assembled devotees, blowing horns and shouting in Tibetan 'Bless us, that all may be well.' All those present then lined up to climb onto the altar, this time offering beef and mutton and sprinkling *qingke* (barley) wine.

When it was all over, the people mounted their horses and circled the altar a few times before riding off, dispersing to their widely scattered homes.

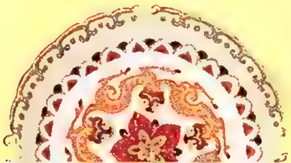
Translated by M.K.

Drawing on Tradition: Beijing Carpets

PHOTOS BY LU HONGG

Photo by Wang Miao

Carpets, rugs, tapestries and similar products have had a long and illustrious history in the East, particularly in Central Asia, the Caucasus and Asia Minor. Originally they were developed by nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples for practical as well as decorative reasons; they kept the family warm and comfortable in their tents, they were easy to transport, and they could be made by the womenfolk from the wool of their own animals in their spare time. Smaller pieces were made into saddle bags, saddlecloths and sundry other animal trappings.



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RTICLE BY DU KETAO

Kashi (Kashgar) in Xinjiang was an important carpet-making centre from early times. Fragments of woven relics found along the Silk Road in Xinjiang attest to the antiquity of rugs there. A small woollen rug found in a burial pit for horses at Sanpula, Lop County, in the Tarim Basin, which experts have assumed to be a kind of saddle blanket, has been dated to the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220).

Around one thousand years ago the Jin (1115-1234) invaded from the north and captured Beijing. With them they brought carpets and rugs. The Mongols, northern yurt-dwellers, also helped to popularize rugs for interior use in China proper when they founded the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368). Gradually, carpets in China became the prerogative of the ruling class, status symbols, and thus increasingly classified. Strict criteria were introduced at the imperial workshops as regards size, colourings and amount and type of materials used.

The popularity of carpets at court increased further during the Ming and Qing dynasties. In fact, it was during the latter, especially under the emperors Kangxi (reign dates 1662-1722) and Qianlong (reign dates 1736-1795) that the greatest progress was made. According to an imperial memorandum of 1723, there were then nine skilled carpet-makers employed at the imperial workshops. The carpets were of course only for use by the court and the highest rank of the nobility. The carpets now exhibited at the Palace Museum, once the Forbidden City of the Chinese emperors, reveal that they were made to the strictest quality specifications. Only the best would do for the 'Son of Heaven'! The first commercial factory only started up in 1860, when a Tibetan Buddhist monk was granted special imperial permission.

Beijing's carpet factories today base many of their designs

FOIRE INTERNATIONALE DE POZNAN
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those found in the Imperial ılace and have even developed ange treated to look like tiques. Favourite motifs with esent-day clients still include the traditional auspicious mbols so often seen in painting ıd embroidery. These include e bat, the dragon and phoenix, each sprays, and borrowed otifs such as the Tibetan ıddhist eight treasures.

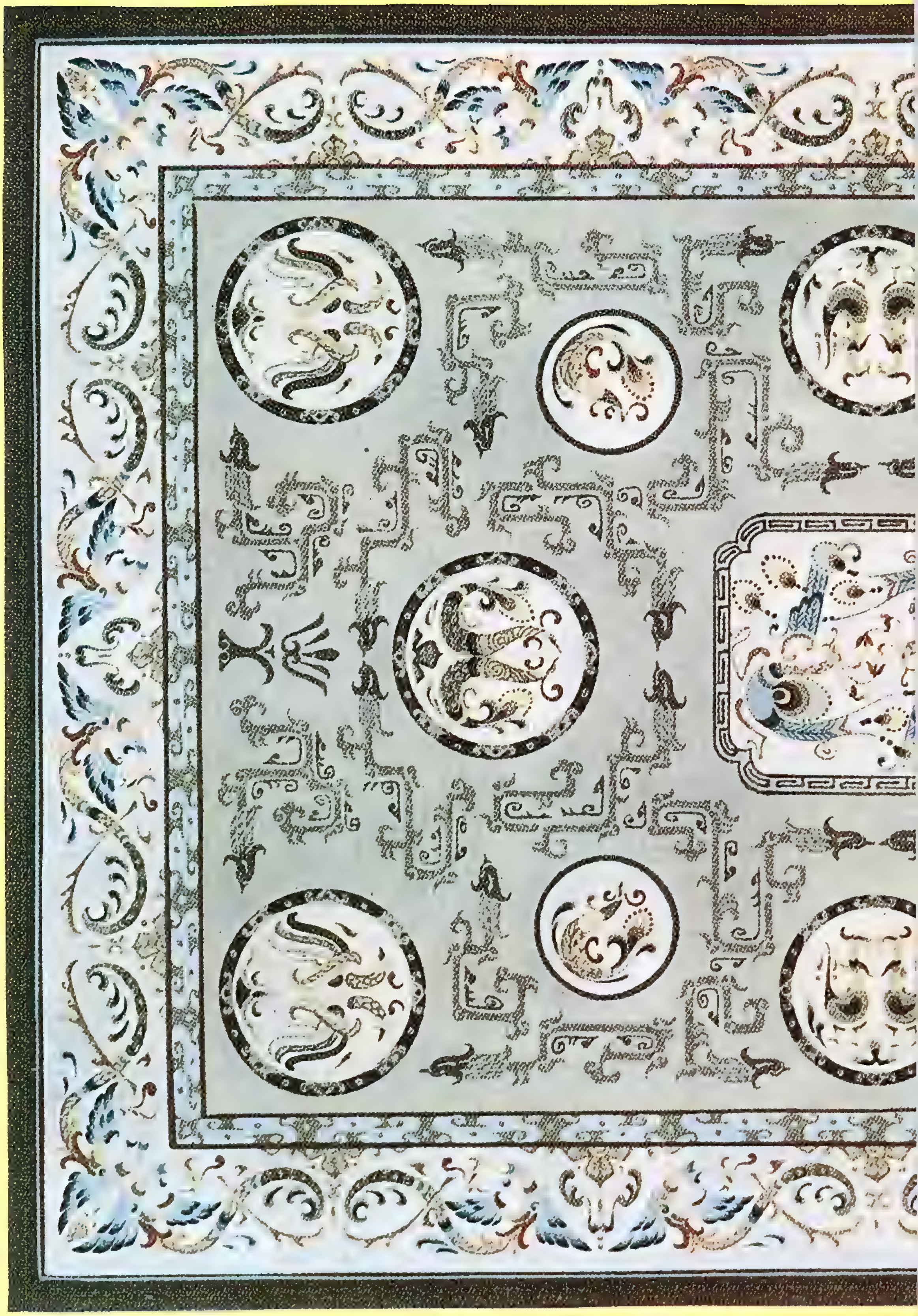
Other modern ranges of carpets ake a conscious effort to reflect pects of China's history. Designs ay incorporate stylized onzeware, Tang-dynasty glazed ottery horses and camels, chitectural elements, even motifs ased on famous cave murals.

Apart from borrowings from assical Persian carpets, there are so traces of the traditions of other ountries, sometimes to bring the hinese wares into line with the emands of the international xport market. Thus, for example, nother range presents the florid rabesques, complex borders and oncentric patterns of French ubusson-type carpets.

Beijing carpets are generally nade from wool on a cotton warp nd weft, using an adapted ouble-knot technique. They have deep pile, one of their most istinctive features, which is often lipped and sheared to produce a relief', almost three-dimensional, mbossed look. Some of the best of the modern designs, which are ısually monochrome or employ a simple, subtle colour scheme, use his to striking effect.

From 1900, when a German nerchant from Tianjin sent an example from Beijing's oldest carpet factory to an exhibition in Berlin, Chinese carpets have attracted the admiration of the world. Many awards have followed. Beijing's 'Temple of Heaven' brand carpets are doing particularly well internationally. They won a gold medal at the Spring Fair in Leipzig in 1984, as well as a gold medal at the Poznan Fair that same year.

Translated by Gu Weizhou



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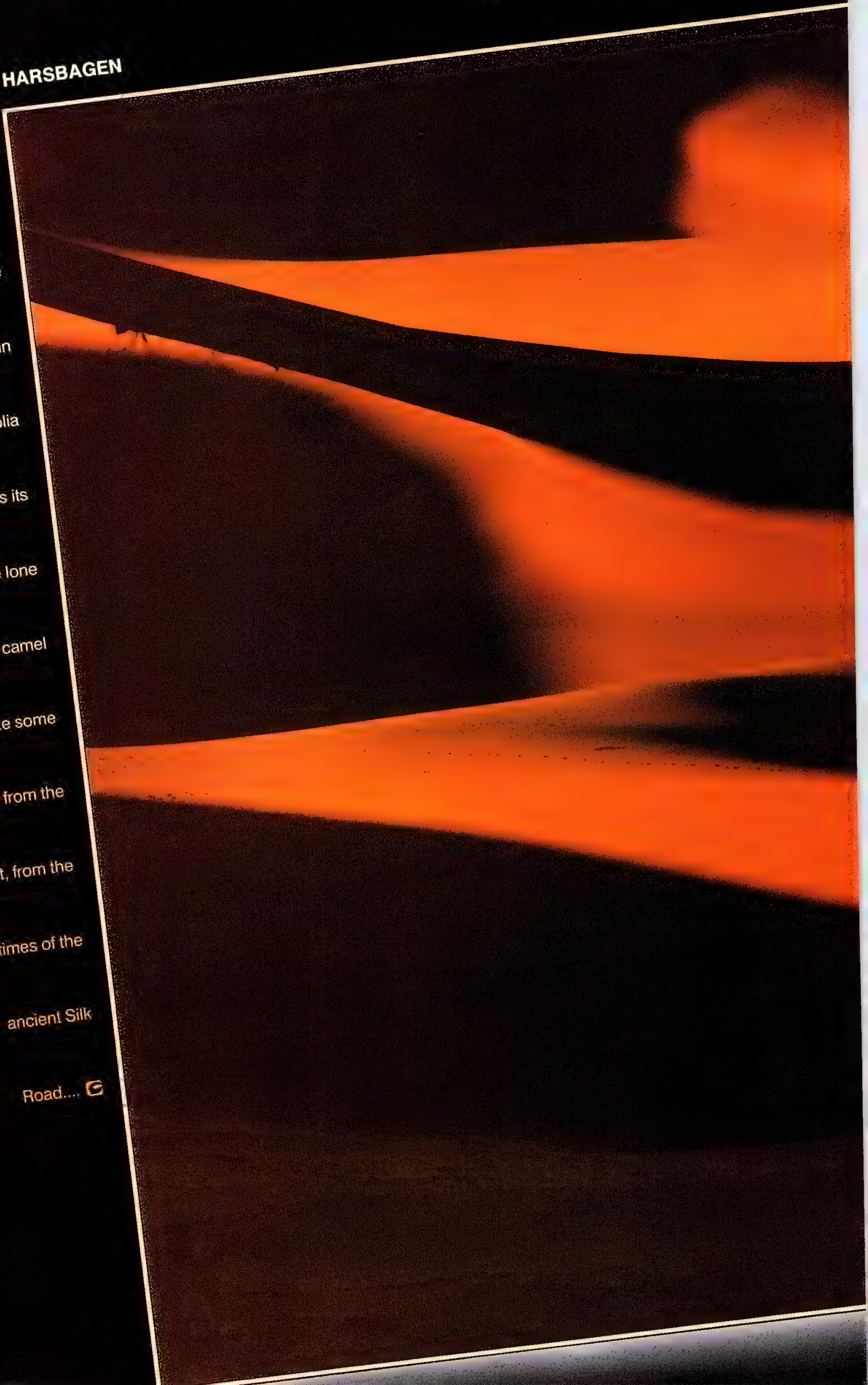
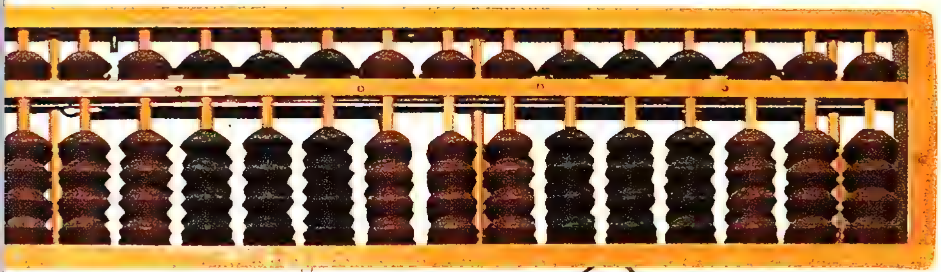
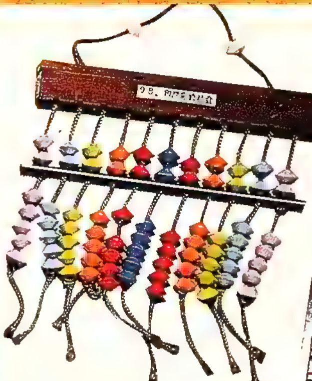
PHOTOGRAPHER: HARSBAGEN

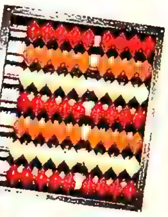
The setting sun deepens the shadows of the Tengger Desert in Inner Mongolia and enhances its mystery. The lone traveller and camel seem like some mirage from the past, from the times of the ancient Silk Road....

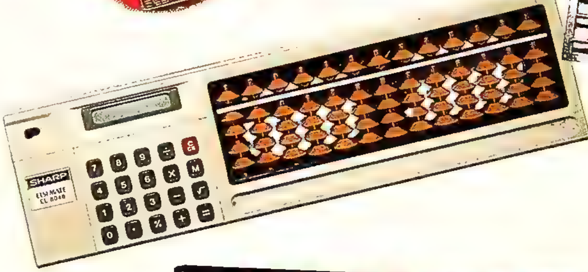


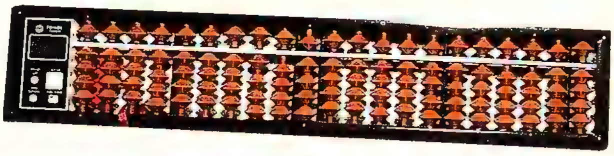
The Abacus Through the Ages

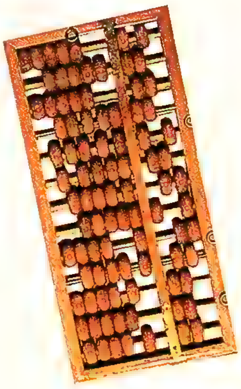


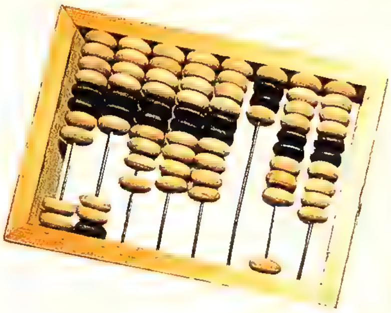


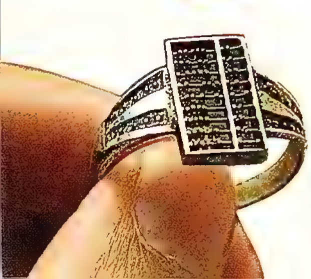












PHOTOS BY CHAN YAT NIN
TEXT BY LO KIT YI

Different times, different places and different purposes have produced a variety of versions of that common Chinese calculating device, the abacus. Such 'calculators' have been in use in China from early times, developing – it is believed – from a simple tally system. They were widely used by the time of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).

Some of these versions can be seen in the collection of Shanghai resident Chen Baoding, now in his seventies. Chen has been collecting and researching the abacus and other such devices since the 1930s, when he worked as a bank accountant. He is the only (known) collector in this field in China.

His collection includes abacuses made of such diverse materials as gold, paper, porcelain and nuts. The most precious is a small Ming abacus of ivory, the back plate of which is carved with a delightful floral design. This was originally an ornament and was worn on the person of a Ming nobleman.

The largest of Chen's abacuses is four metres long and has two hundred rods and 1,400 beads. It is a reproduction of an abacus which was inlaid on the counter of a large pharmacy in the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127). It is said that it could be used by seven people at once.

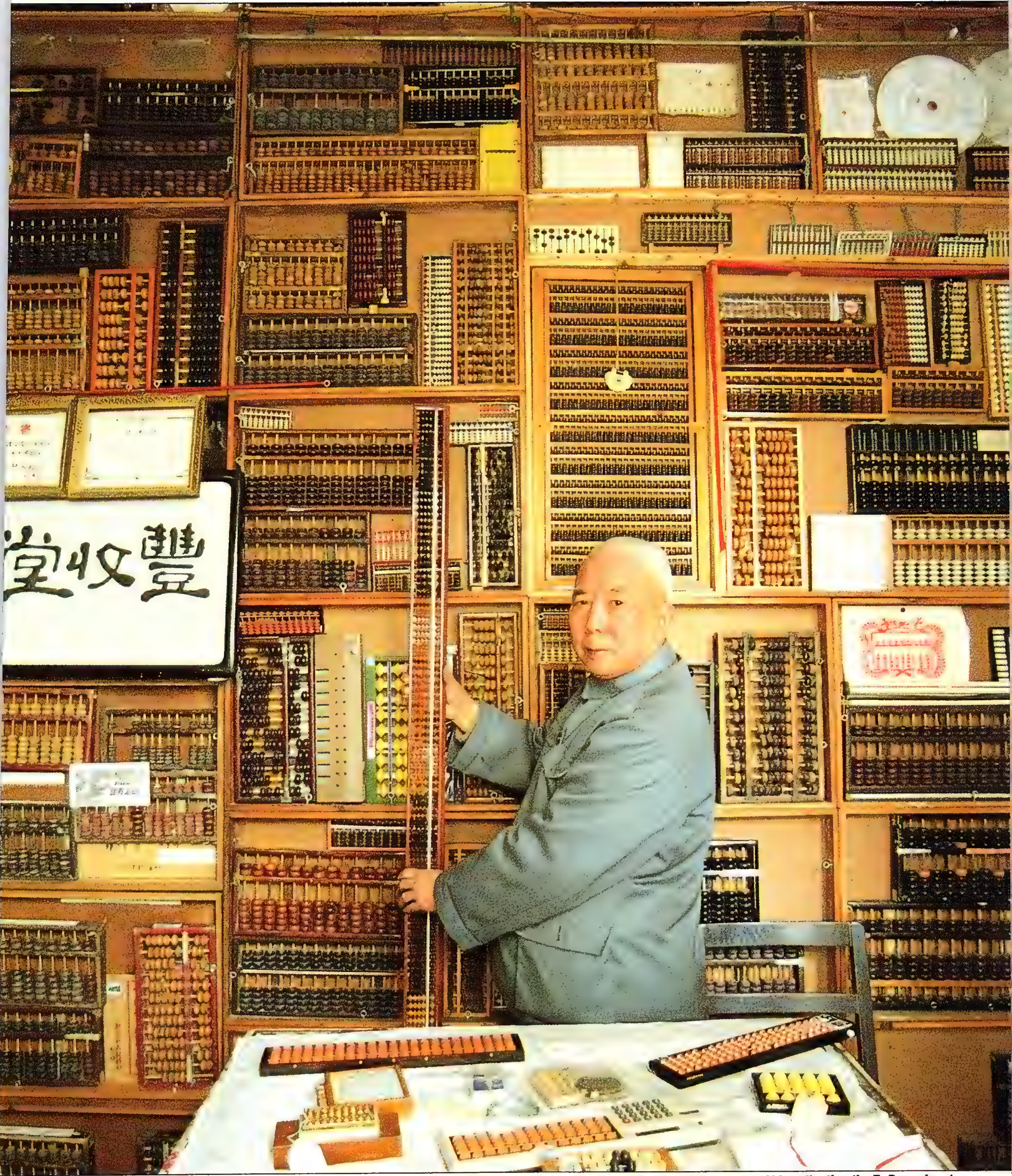
Another fairly large abacus, sixty centimetres long and thirty centimetres wide, has a spring inserted in each bead so that it will stay in place and not slip up and down too easily. Still bearing the trademark 'Commercial Press Bookstore', this abacus is thought to date from the 1930s and was even patented.

The smallest abacus in Mr Chen's collection forms an integral part of a silver ring. Again intended for personal wear by a Ming-dynasty noble, mainly for the purpose of repelling evil spirits, this one is just twelve millimetres long, seven millimetres wide, and 1.5 millimetres thick. It has seven rods, each with seven beads. Though so tiny, the beads can still be manœuvred with the aid of a needle.

There is also an abacus specifically designed for the blind. The usual beads are replaced by wooden tabs which can be flipped back and forth rather like the slats of a Venetian blind.

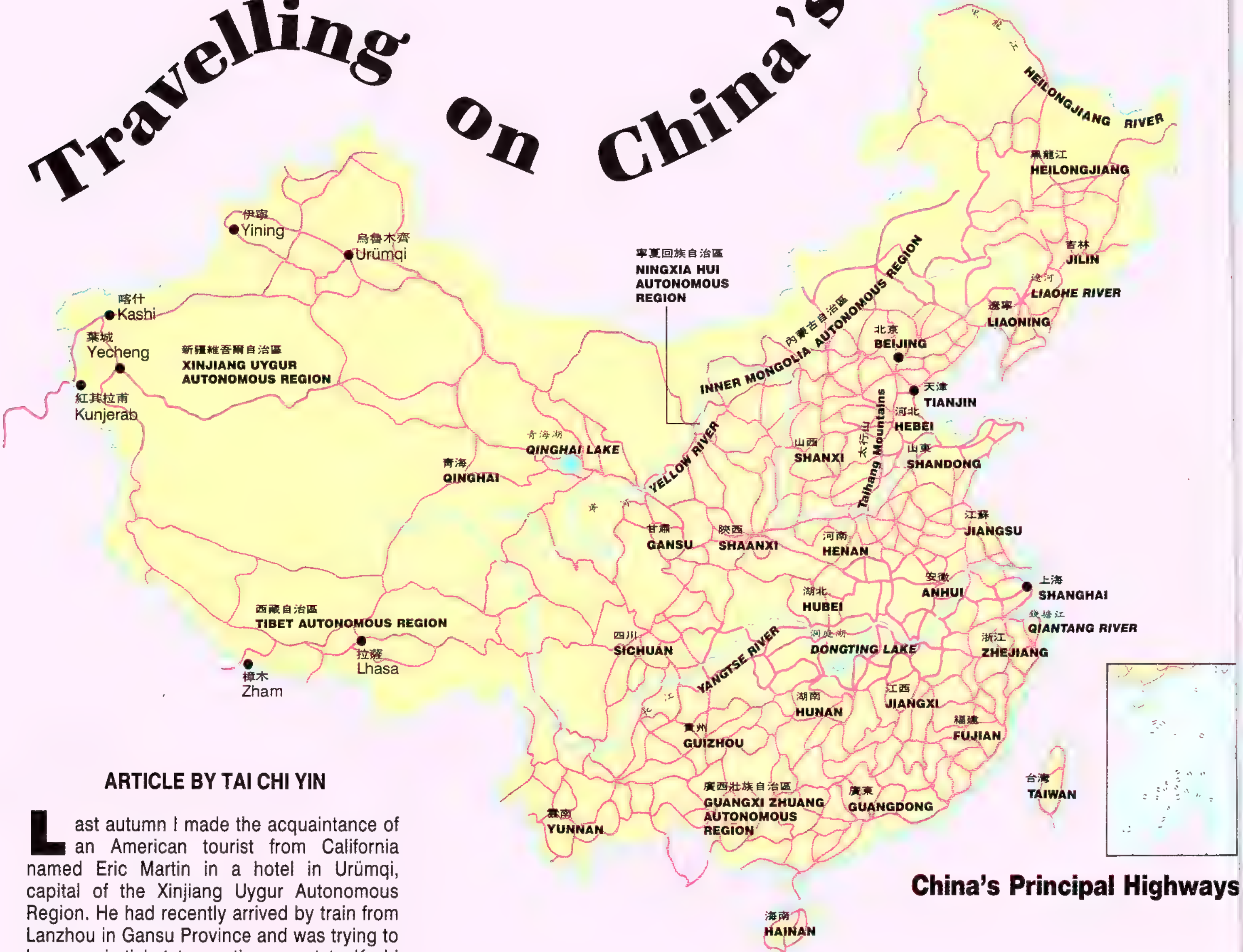
Perhaps the most vivid piece in Chen's collection is an Indian hanging abacus. The different-coloured beads are mounted on strings instead of rods. This abacus makes a very attractive wall decoration, although its original purpose was practical, and it certainly forms a strong contrast to Chen's astonishing electronic abacus, a mixture of traditional and hi-tech.

Translated by M.K.



Chen Baoding with part of his collection (by Er Dongqiang)

Travelling on China's Roads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Yining
烏魯木齊
Urümqi
喀什
Kashi
葉城
Yecheng
紅其拉甫
Kunjerab
新疆維吾爾自治區
XINJIANG UYGUR AUTONOMOUS REGION
寧夏回族自治區
NINGXIA HUI AUTONOMOUS REGION
內蒙古自治區
INNER MONGOLIA AUTONOMOUS REGION
HEILONGJIANG RIVER
黑龍江
HEILONGJIANG
吉林
JILIN
遼河
LIAOHE RIVER
遼寧
LIAONING
北京
BEIJING
天津
TIANJIN
河北
HEBEI
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QINGHAI LAKE
青海
QINGHAI
YELLOW RIVER
甘肅
GANSU
陝西
SHAANXI
河南
HENAN
江蘇
JIANGSU
安徽
ANHUI
上海
SHANGHAI
錢塘江
QIANTANG RIVER
浙江
ZHEJIANG
湖北
HUBEI
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廣東
GUANGDONG
雲南
YUNNAN
台灣
TAIWAN
海南
HAINAN

China's Principal Highways

ARTICLE BY TAI CHI YIN

Last autumn I made the acquaintance of an American tourist from California named Eric Martin in a hotel in Urümqi, capital of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. He had recently arrived by train from Lanzhou in Gansu Province and was trying to buy an air ticket to continue west to Kashi (Kashgar). For days on end he had been snubbed by the staff at Urümqi's Civil Aviation Office; they kept telling him that the tickets were sold out or that the flight had been cancelled. Eventually, since he was determined to get there, Eric had no choice but to book a seat on the long-distance bus. As he said goodbye, ticket in hand, he pulled a long face at the prospect of a long and tedious journey — four days and three nights!

A week later I bumped into him again outside a mosque in Kashi. He was in a state of great excitement and poured out all his strange and wonderful experiences on the road to Kashi: the desert crossing, a violent hailstorm, the night at Kuqa, which used to be a major oasis on the old Silk Road. He conceded that it was definitely the most memorable journey he had ever made in China.

This is by no means an isolated occurrence. Too many foreign travellers overlook the importance of road transport in China. Statistics show that there are more than one million kilometres of roads country-wide, seventeen times the figure for the railways. To date, with the exception of two remote county towns tucked away in the mountains, all of China's cities and larger towns are linked by road. Construction of many more roads, including higher-grade, multi-lane roads is underway.

Due to geographical conditions, the road network — like the railways — is concentrated mainly in the densely populated Central Plains and in the eastern seaboard provinces such as Shandong, Henan, Hebei, Anhui, Jiangsu and Zhejiang. Roads become rarer as you progress further west. In Qinghai and Tibet in particular, on a high plateau at an average altitude of over 3,000 metres above sea-level, where the natural terrain is difficult and the population sparse, there are few roads. And these are not usually asphalted. They tend to be rough tracks of sand and stone, fit only for rugged vehicles like jeeps and very tough on passengers.

For this reason, trains remain the most convenient means of long-distance transport wherever there are railways, especially in the Central Plains and the coastal areas, where bus routes (often using airconditioned vehicles) are mostly limited to linking neighbouring cities and towns. Yet, in the majority of Xinjiang, Tibet, Sichuan and Qinghai, where the railway network is less developed or non-existent, buses may in many cases be the only way of getting from A to B. It is therefore important to know a few basic facts about road transport in China.

Foreigners who are unfamiliar with conditions in China may have the idea of hiring a car and driving themselves around. Unfortunately, there is no formal car rental service as yet in this country. It is of course possible to hire a chauffeur-driven vehicle through the local China Travel Service or from the hotel in which you are staying.

owever, this can also be extraordinarily xpensive! The most practical way to do this if several people are prepared to club ogether and share expenses. A service of his kind is available for those wishing to take he Sino-Nepalese or Sino-Pakistani Highways. Often a jeep (with driver) is rented by our or five tourists. For those who wish to njoy the scenery to the full, visit places of nterest at their leisure and take photos along he road, this is definitely the ideal solution.

But, of course, not everybody who visits China can afford this. Other options, particularly when travelling in the remote northwest and southwest, are to take a long-distance bus or – the last resort – try to hitch a lift.

Long-distance buses are single-deck vehicles which provide regular services between cities and county towns. In Xinjiang and Tibet, because of the truly enormous distances involved, bus travel is almost invariably long-distance. Even a relatively short journey may take five to six hours. A long journey, such as that between Chengdu in Sichuan and Lhasa in Tibet, may take well over a week, weather and road conditions permitting!

In most cases, the long-distance bus station is located in the urban centre. At the station there is a waiting room and a booking office, with a chart giving routes, number of kilometres covered, timetables and bus fares. Non-Chinese-speakers are advised to get help from someone beforehand in writing down in Chinese characters the name of their destination and the desired date of travel to show the clerk at the booking office. In general, bus tickets are readily available. The exceptions are routes such as between Golmud in Qinghai and Lhasa or between Urümqi and Kashi. Tickets for these routes are snapped up so quickly partly because there may be only one service a day or even less ... maybe only one service a week.

Long-distance bus fares are comparable with train fares. All transport costs within China have risen sharply since this September, but the ratio between the fares of various types of transport has been maintained.

On the day of departure, passengers should reach the bus station in plenty of time to dispose of their luggage (not to exceed twenty kilos in weight). The driver stacks all the luggage on the roof of the bus and covers it with a tarpaulin lashed down with rope. Since you have no access to this luggage during the journey, you should bring a carry-on knapsack or bag containing personal effects (tooth brush, towel, medicine, warm clothing, valuables, camera). Note that it is better to wrap your main luggage in a tough plastic or nylon cover to give it extra protection.

Since terrain and climate vary widely in China, it would be best to ask someone locally about road conditions and what you should expect en route to help you with your planning. For instance, if you take the road from Golmud to Lhasa, the Qinghai-Tibet Highway, you climb the Kunlun Pass at 4,837 metres and the Tanggula Pass at 5,220 metres. This obviously calls for an anorak or something really warm and possibly tablets against altitude sickness. If you take the Xinjiang Highway, on the other hand, necessities for crossing the desert include strong sunglasses, a hooded jacket, and a mask or scarf to protect the nose and mouth. In the most out-of-the-way places in Tibet, hotels are few and far between and after nightfall the temperature drops well below zero; a warm sleeping bag is a necessity.

All bus seats are numbered and there are three seats on one side and two on the other. Wherever you sit, there is limited leg room! Another thing to note: the earlier you book, the nearer the front you are likely to be seated, which means less bumping. If you are unlucky enough to be assigned a seat at the rear of the bus, you can look forward to being jolted about for hours on end. In other words, book as early as you possibly can.

Mercifully, owing to the rough ground and the fact that the vehicles on these routes age rapidly, the bus tends to move slowly. The driver stops from time to time for passengers to have a bite to eat and answer nature's calls ... and to wait for the engine to cool down. Breakdowns are not at all uncommon and the bus normally reaches the overnight stop at dusk or even after dark and departs the next day at daybreak.

Travelling by bus does however have certain advantages over train travel. You are closer to the countryside and the people and you experience everything more directly. In a train you feel and are more 'insulated' from the outside world.

There are several routes in Qinghai, Tibet and Xinjiang which are truly thrilling to traverse, not least because of their splendid scenery. The following are some of the most famous (note that the term 'highway' does not mean a higher grade of road; these are mainly still unasphalted). Their 'openness' to foreign travellers at any time depends on the official policy of the moment.

The **Sino-Nepalese Highway** or **Friendship Highway**, finished in 1964-1966, which runs west and south from Lhasa via Xigazê to the border at Zham. It terminates in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. Covering a total of 1,004 kilometres, it crosses the Himalayas and bypasses the world's highest peak, Qomolangma (Mount Everest). Views can be magnificent, depending on the clarity of the skies and the season, but the road may be closed by snow. The situation for individual foreign travellers taking this route is unclear at the time of going to press, although groups have recently been permitted to travel from Kathmandu to Lhasa.

The **Sichuan-Tibet Highway** runs between Chengdu and Lhasa. Beyond Kangding, capital of the Garzê Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, the road forks: the northern route via the Chola Pass (4,889 metres), Dêgê and Qamdo is 2,405 kilometres long, the southern route via Batang and Markam 2,085 kilometres. Frequently impassable in winter, this is considered to have the most beautiful and varied scenery (see CHINA TOURISM no.74). It is officially closed to foreign travellers at present.

The **Xinjiang Highway** between Urümqi and Yining (Gulja), the centre of the Ili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture, cuts across the Tianshan Mountains and runs for seven hundred kilometres across the vast deserts, a two-day journey. Before arriving in Yining the road curves down from the north, giving views of lovely Lake Sayram.

The **Sino-Pakistani Highway** or **Karakoram Highway**. This runs from Kashi in Xinjiang across the Pamir Plateau, skirting Mount Kongur (7,719 metres) and Muztagata (7,546 metres), to Taxkorgan, home of the Tajik people. It continues via the Kunjerab Pass at 4,800 metres to the Pakistani checkpoint at Sust. The highway terminates in Islamabad after passing through Hunza and Gilgit – a total distance of approximately 1,100 kilometres (see CHINA TOURISM no. 79). The road, on which work started in 1967, was opened to foreigners in 1986, but it is blocked by snow from about the end of October to the beginning of May.

The **Xinjiang-Tibet Highway** links Yecheng in southern Xinjiang with Lhasa, giving insight into a very large chunk of Tibet since it makes a loop through the western part of the region. This is a very high road at an average altitude of over 4,000 metres above sea-level. The road is rugged in the extreme and one is likely to suffer from altitude sickness. Although foreign travellers have taken this route in the past (see Travellers' Corner, CHINA TOURISM nos. 94 and 102), its 'open' status has always been rather dubious. CHINA TOURISM no. 60 has more on western Tibet.

The **Qinghai-Tibet Highway**, said to be the highest road in the world. From Xining, capital of Qinghai Province, it crosses formidable terrain – the Qaidam Basin and the Kunlun and Tanggula Ranges – at altitudes between 4,000 and 5,000 metres above sea-level. The distance between Xining and Lhasa is about 2,100 kilometres. Originally completed between 1952 and 1954, the road was upgraded in 1985 and is now an asphalt highway representing the major land transport artery into Tibet. See CHINA TOURISM no. 41.

There are regular bus services on the above-mentioned routes, with the exception of the Xinjiang-Tibet Highway, for most of the year, although they may be only once a week. Where there is no regular service, hopeful passengers should seek information from local transport companies to find out if there are any trucks or vans travelling in the desired direction. If so, you can approach the driver directly (with Chinese-speaking assistance if necessary) and discuss the fare. If he agrees to take you, you will probably end up paying a little less than the standard bus fare.

If all else fails, intrepid souls can wait at the exit from town and try to hitch a lift. You will usually be lucky enough to be picked up, although various foreign acquaintances have reported having to sit in the middle of nowhere for more than a few days while waiting for a lift in western Tibet!

Translated by Ren Jiazhen

The Sorrows of Egret Lake

This short story, like the others in the collection from which it is taken – all written between 1932 and 1943 – captures the beauty, misery and mystery of rural China during the War of Resistance Against Japan in the 1930s and 1940s. It vividly depicts the spirit of the difficult times in which it was written.

The author, Duanmu Hongliang (real name Cao Jingping), was born in 1912 in Changdu County, Liaoning Province. At the age of twenty-one, in 1933, he published his first novel, *Horqin Banner Grasslands*. From 1936 to 1937 he wrote several short stories, including the present one, based on the sights and scenes with which he was so familiar from his native place. Many more novels and short stories have followed.

He recently admitted, 'For as long as I can remember, I have enjoyed learning all about people and places. Local conditions and customs have always held an irresistible attraction for me.'

A bright red moon, like an eye puffy from crying, rose into the shimmering copper mist. The mist, warm and melancholic, shone like translucent dust, enveloping the lake in a dizzying haze.

A flock of egrets, necks stretched out ahead, wings flapping gracefully, circled the tree-lined edges of the fields below. Once they had passed, the air fell silent and lonely again. Dragonflies that normally skimmed over the surface of the lake, their tiny jade-blue heads glinting in the sunlight, their tireless wings spread, were gone for the day. Only the crimson waterflies, which were attracted to the fetid, moldy earth, continued to drone noisily. Two boys were standing at the lake shore.

One of them, tall and broad-shouldered, was bent over spreading a straw mat out on the ground. The shorter, slighter boy was cradling a red-tasseled spear in his arms as he stood off to the side looking into the distance, as though he were trying to fix the boundary of the murky night.

"I wonder why it's so sticky tonight...," he said with a sigh.

The other boy ignored him as he sat down on his straw mat and wrapped his arms around his knees, shivering slightly as he looked up at the moon.

"It's nearly the fifteenth, so there's no need to sleep in the shed. Let's lay our bedding out here, where we can see the moon."

"The moon's an evil red!"

"That's a bad omen!"

"They say it means war."

"Um."

The two fell silent. A white mist floated across from the opposite shore of the lake. Lamplights flickered on a poplar-dotted hill in a hidden valley, then vanished like will-o'-the-wisps.

"We'll have to be on our guard, because there might be thieves out tonight. I smell trouble, so be alert," the taller boy said.

"So what! We'll scare them off. They're out every night, anyway."

"No, this time it's different. Tonight we show them we mean business. It's nearly time for the Mid-autumn Festival."

"You can't make a 'mooncake' out of a 'flatcake'," the other boy sneered.

"Who says? At least we'll get our lumps in."

The smaller boy put down his red-tasseled spear, took off his damp shoes, and sat down on the straw mat. "The fog's getting thick," he muttered, a nameless, persistent fear creeping into his heart and showing through the darkness in his sunken eyes.

The moon had climbed into the sky, transforming all visible things into hazy, evanescent illusions. Dark shadows hidden among the cracks and hollows stared out at them. A poplar standing like a guardian of the night cast a shadow that was double its own size, blotting out the lake beneath it. A pointed boulder jutting out through the surface of the water was a pale rent in the surrounding darkness. The lake was suffused with th limitless melancholy of despair.

"Brother Laibao, how old are you?" th younger boy asked.

"Twenty-three. I'm not a kid anymore," th older one answered with childish arrogance.

"I'm sixteen. Mama says that next year I won have to work for half pay anymore."

"You, you ought to take it a little easier. Don try to do too much. These are tough times, an your bones are still soft. If you wind up wit consumption from too much hard work, you regret it for the rest of your life."

"What can I do? Dad's getting old, and las year even though someone gave him thre doses of vitality medicine, it didn't do any goo If I can hire on for a year and earn a hundred c so, that should turn things around."

"But you have to get hired on, and *I* can even do that. No one's hiring these days. Who' willing to pay a hundred dollars a year to a hire hand when they can't even be sure of sellin their autumn crop for that much? Besides, loo how skinny you are."

"I'll eat less and work extra hard."

"Ai! Stop worrying about tomorrow. 'Don take off your shoes till you reach that river.' sneaked some wine, want some? It's goo stuff!" After fumbling around in his waistband fo a while he brought out a small jug of wine and roll of dried bean curd.

The younger boy shook his head in lonesome gesture, watching the other boy eat.

"Oh, Manao, I forgot to tell you. Things ar going to get better. Someone's heading for th capital, and there's going to be fighting soon This time it's the truth, no more tricks. They sa the volunteers* have been given a secret order hidden in the sole of a shoe. People coming u through the pass now only have the soles o their shoes searched, nowhere else. They wan the volunteers to strike first."

"Brother Laibao, let's join the volunteers what do you say?"

"Of course. When the time comes, we'll al go. We're Chinese, aren't we?"

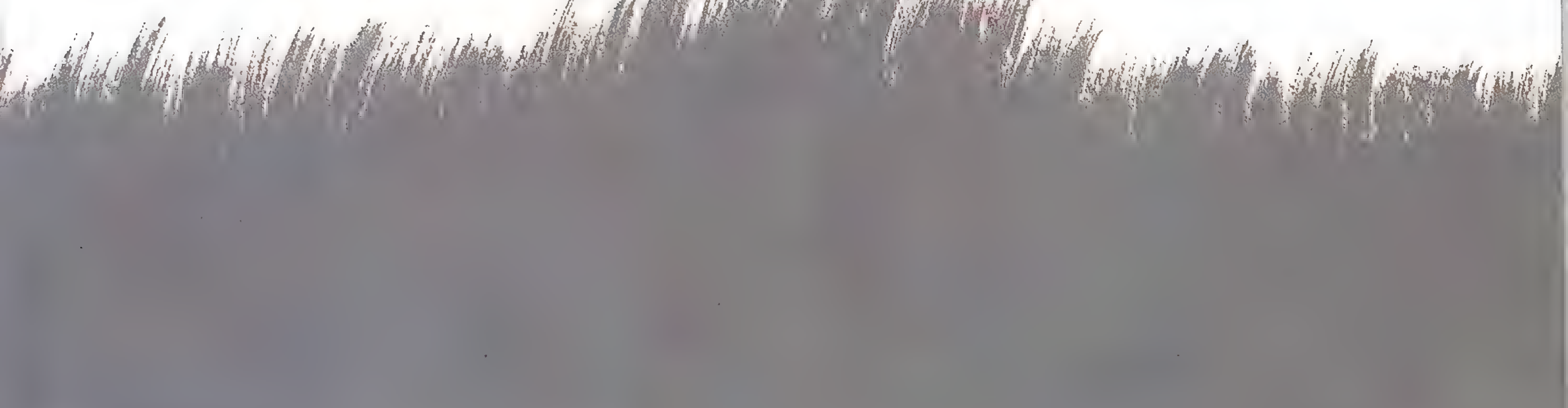
Manao, the younger boy, thought hard for a moment.

"Will we get our own land then?"

"No, the land stays with the landlord, but the price of grain will go up, and people will be hiring again."

"It's the same old story," Manao sighed. "Those without anything will never get anything."

"Is your mother getting you a wife?" Laibao asked abruptly.



Manao only blushed.

"Eat some dried bean curd. I can't finish it ... etting a wife is sort of like buying a head of estock. Your dad will be able to retire and take e easy. I saw him a while ago by the lake. Ai, e's so stooped he's almost bent double."

"But it takes money to get a wife. Mama anted to give them two bolts of cloth, but they ouldn't agree. They said girls are worth money ese days, and if they hadn't agreed to the etrothal when we were kids, they wouldn't even iscuss it."

"Hm, they are fools. With all the fighting and onfusion, keeping a grown girl at home like that . hmph. Have some bean curd, I can't finish it."

"My dad coughs every night now, and Mama as to get up every night to boil some water to oothe his cough."

"Ai ... let's turn in. We'll have to get up in the iddle of the night to drive off the thieves."

Placing their two spears on the mat between hem, Laibao lay down and covered himself with tattered thin quilt. "Aren't you going to sleep?" e poked out his head and asked.

The younger boy pulled up a corner of the uilt without saying a word and slipped under it.

The sound of a barking dog drifted over from distant village, then there was silence.

The fog closed in completely. Another thread of murky, milky mist curled round and round, enveloping the shore reeds and forming a damp, cold, sluggish, and nearly invisible ball of moisture on the surface of the lake then forming into a thick layer of white mist that slowly blended with the yellow fog above. The moonbeams filtering through played on a vast panorama of emptiness.

"Brother Laibao, this fighting you were talking about, is it going to start on the day of the Mid-autumn Festival, like in the story of the Tartars?"

"......"

"Brother Laibao, did you see my dad a while ago?"

"......"

"Are you asleep?... Like a log...."

"......" He rolled over.

"Brother Laibao."

"......"

In the darkness a pair of eyes looked forlornly heavenward.

The fog was now so thick they couldn't see each other clearly.

The two boys slept soundly beside the lake. Behind them were rows of beanstalks whose leaves were already hanging lifelessly, for the beans had ripened in their pods and were waiting there silently to be picked. The crickets called "bean brethren" did not chirp on nights like this, for the heavy dampness soaked their gauze-like "voices".

The withered beanstalk leaves rustled briefly, then were still.

"Don't beat me...." Manao was talking in his sleep. "I won't do it again ... ow!... Don't hit my waist ... don't...." A white-quilled hedgehog sniffing him blindly was frightened by his shouts and scampered off toward the bean field.

The beanstalk leaves rustled again, louder than before. The hedgehog had vanished.

Then came a slashing sound from the bean field.

Manao sneezed and woke himself up. Putting his ear to the ground, he listened intently. The slash of a sickle, beanstalks falling to the ground, being piled up, footsteps ... he opened his eyes wide in the darkness and cast a doubtful look at the moon, probably trying to estimate the hour.

He nudged Laibao. "Someone's out there!" It was barely a whisper.

He nudged Laibao again, who woke up, his face puffy with sleep. He made a gesture, then put his ear to the ground. "Over by the Ox-rub section!" He grinned. "Let's give it to him!"

"Nab him, you mean?"

"Right! It's time for his 'mooncake'!"

They quietly got to their feet and made their way to Ox-rub, both of them bending low to avoid being seen by the thief, who might get away. Manao braced himself, then threaded his way through the beanstalks. "This damned thief is going to get what's coming to him – a nice holiday gift of fists!" he thought. He tightened his grip on his spear.

The fog was so thick that when they split up they had to rely on the slight rustling of leaves to keep track of one another. Laibao, with all his experience, headed straight for Ox-rub. His fists clenched, he was like a powerful lion poised in the grass waiting for its prey. He paused, his eyes opened wide as he stared into the red mist.

Manao's heart was heavy. The murky mist was moving toward him like a mass of congealed blood. He shivered.

Suddenly there was a cry of pain as something crashed to the ground. Laibao was already on top of the man.

"You old scoundrel, where do you think you are!" Laibao was breathlessly beating and cursing the culprit. "Let's hear you scream now, you scoundrel!" He had his hands around the thief's throat.

"Dad! Dad!" Manao screamed hysterically as he threw himself down onto the two men on the ground.

Stunned, Laibao rubbed his eyes. "Ah...."

The old man lay on the ground, a gray pall covering his face as he choked and gasped, a trickle of blood flowing from a cut.

The two youngsters stood there not knowing what to do.

The old man glared hatefully at them and struggled to his feet. Although his back was nearly bent double, it was clear that in his youth he had been a strong, unyielding farmhand. Thirty years ago he had been one of the best.

"Uncle Ma, Uncle Ma...." Laibao was speechless.

The old man sprang forward, picked up his sickle and a length of rope, then gave the boys a venomous look before hobbling off.

Silently, they walked back to the lake.

"You turn in. I'm not sleepy," Laibao said angrily as he sat down and hugged his knees.

"Do you look down on my dad?"

"Don't be silly. Go to sleep." His broad shoulders heaved.

"I ... I'm no damned good. If I could only earn a little more...."

"What good would that do? Would that solve the problems of the poor?" Laibao snorted contemptuously.

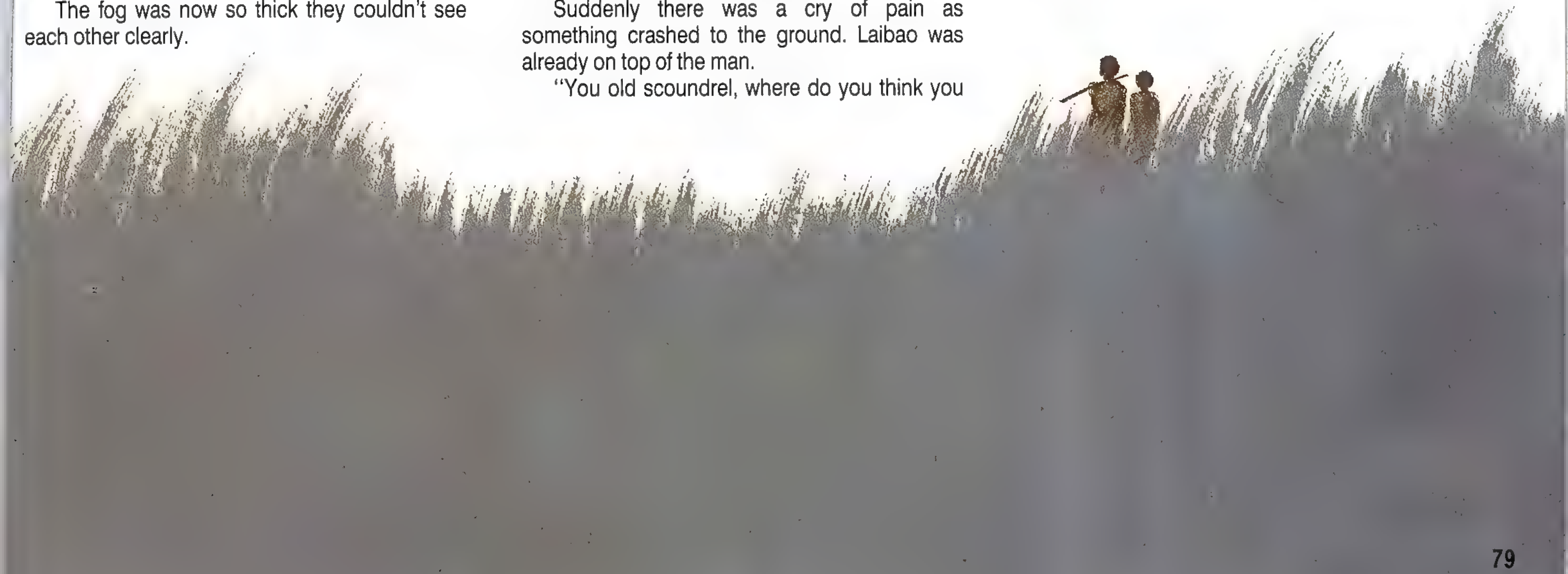
"But Dad ... ah, he's so old!"

"Old? That old man's all right!"

"All right?"

"That's what I said!" Laibao mumbled something under his breath.

Manao threw himself down on the mat dejectedly, sunk in a profound sadness. His exhausted mind was getting numb. He felt that his strength was sapped, that there was no more life in him at all. There was only desolation before him – no hope, no salvation, and a persistent cry of despair rang in his painfully swollen ears.



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* The volunteers were guerilla forces organized to resist the Japanese, who had invaded Northeast China in 1931 and set up the puppet regime of Manchukuo. The "capital" was Xinjing, in the city previously and subsequently known as Changchun, in Jilin Province.

After tossing and turning for a while, he finally sank exhaustedly into an abyss of pain and slumber, his consciousness slipping away in a confused blur.

He was awakened by the sound of low voices, which seemed to be coming from far away. Another thief, he thought. Laibao had stayed awake, hadn't he? Poor Dad hadn't returned, had he? He roused himself. Laibao wasn't there beside him.

The moon was like a shimmering ball of fire in the western sky. It must be getting close to dawn. The ghostly crow of a rooster sounded off in the distance.

"Come on, little fellow ... you're not bashful, are you? Come on!..."

Manao couldn't tell where the sound was coming from.

"Go ahead, hit me! Go ahead, hit me in the breast.... Aiya, you beast! You'll know pretty soon how nice I am.... Come on, over there...."

Although he didn't know what was going on, Manao felt both ashamed and vaguely frightened. Just like before, he heard the slash of a sickle, beanstalks falling to the ground, then being piled up, footsteps ... all with the same urgency, the same agitation, coming from somewhere nearby. No wonder he was frightened. If only Laibao were here, he thought. Steeling himself, he instinctively grabbed hold of his red-tasseled spear and charged ahead in the direction of the sound.

Manao moved clumsily, his heart pounding, sure that he was about to confront a beefy, bearded adversary who would raise his flashing sickle and swing it at his head. He nearly cried out. Maybe he should go back and look for Laibao. But Laibao wasn't there. Behind him was a black and yellow void.

"Who's there!" Manao shouted in a slightly quavering voice. The shout was meant more to boost his own courage than to scare the other man off.

A frail little girl holding a sickle backed off in fright.

"Why don't you run away, you're stealing ... huh?" As soon as Manao saw that his adversary was only a girl trembling like a frightened animal he grew bold in a hurry, although he wondered why she wasn't running away.

"How can a little kid like you be stealing things!"

"Didn't my mother ... mother arrange it with you?" She was so frightened she nearly curled into a ball. She held on to her sickle, her every word, slow and measured, carrying the weight of her depression.

Manao softened his voice, either out of curiosity or to lessen the poor girl's fears.

"Your mother ... who is she?"

"Did ... didn't you see her?" She was quaking from head to toe, convulsive with the fear that she was finished. Her mother hadn't talked to anyone....

"Um ... there are two of us, so maybe your mother arranged it with my friend. Now don't be scared. I was asleep, so I didn't know...."

The girl looked at him warily, like a frightened chick, and slowly lowered her sickle.

Manao felt so miserable he wanted to cry.

The girl turned and resumed cutting the beanstalks, guardedly looking at the boy out of the corner of her eye.

"Do you have a father?" the confused Manao asked, not knowing how to deal with this thief.

The girl shook her head while she continued her taxing work, her progress made slow and halting by the difficulty of grasping the beanstalks in her tiny hands. Clumsily, she cut them down one at a time.

"What about a grandfather?"

"He coughs all the time. Grandpa says he's going to die."

"He coughs?"

"Um. Nights are the worst."

"Does your mother get up at night and boil water for him?"

"Boil water?"

"Yeah, boil water, to soothe his cough."

"No, she doesn't have the time."

"What's she so busy doing?"

"Stealing beans."

"And when she's not stealing beans?"

"She's busy doing something else." The girl sighed softly, probably lamenting her own fragility. The results of all her cutting wouldn't equal a single swipe of the sickle by an adult. But she kept at it, tirelessly, as though that were her sole purpose in life.

"Where's your mother now?" Manao asked, strangely upset.

The girl trembled slightly. Her voice broke. "I don't know."

"How can you be doing this all by yourself?"

"My mother told me to start cutting when she coughed, 'cause that meant she had it all arranged...."

"Um ... your mother...." He was lost in thought. "Aren't you afraid ... such a murky night, can't even see the shadows...."

"......" She looked at him over her shoulde her eyes gleaming. She seemed even smalle than before.

"Do you have an older brother?"

The girl shook her head sadly.

"A younger brother?"

She only sighed.

Manao looked around helplessly. The moo had already sunk in the west. The heavy whit fog, acrid and rank, had become a wooll blanket, the moisture condensing in th spreading cold of the approaching dawn. Sma dewdrops clinging to large ones fell to th ground like tiny embryos. The distant shor weeds, hidden valleys, and large trees began t show dimly through the fog, great shapeles masses of uncertain colors and chaotic, uneas lines. A rooster crowed somewhere, the feebl wail of a wronged ghost.

The girl's hand was bleeding; she wiped it o her coat, then stooped over to continue cutting.

"Do you have a home?..."

"Ai...." She straightened up, breathless and aching, her ribs seemingly about to burst in he tiny chest. "Please, I beg you, don't ask...." She stole a frightened look over her shoulder to see if her words had offended him. "I haven't cu enough, and my mother will be here in a little while.... She'll beat me...." She barely got the last words out. By now fear had her completely in its grip.

Manao bent over listlessly and picked up his red-tasseled spear, then walked off, his feet dragging, his heart like lead.

Waves of fog, muggy and stifling, floated across the desolate ground like a deadly vapor, an endless undulation of turbid heat and noxious miasmas. The upper layers were thinning, to reveal a vast, open void.

The moon, still red, was getting pale.

He stumbled ahead, oblivious to what was underfoot. He had not gone more than a few yards before he stopped abruptly, turned and quickly retraced his steps.

Seeing him coming toward her, the girl recoiled as though struck by lightning and pleaded nervously, "I didn't cut much, I really didn't cut much ... I ... please, just a little more. My mother will be here soon...."

Manao wordlessly snatched the sickle out of her hand and began cutting the stalks.

The far-off rooster crowed angrily. Dawn was about to break.

Translated by Howard Goldblatt

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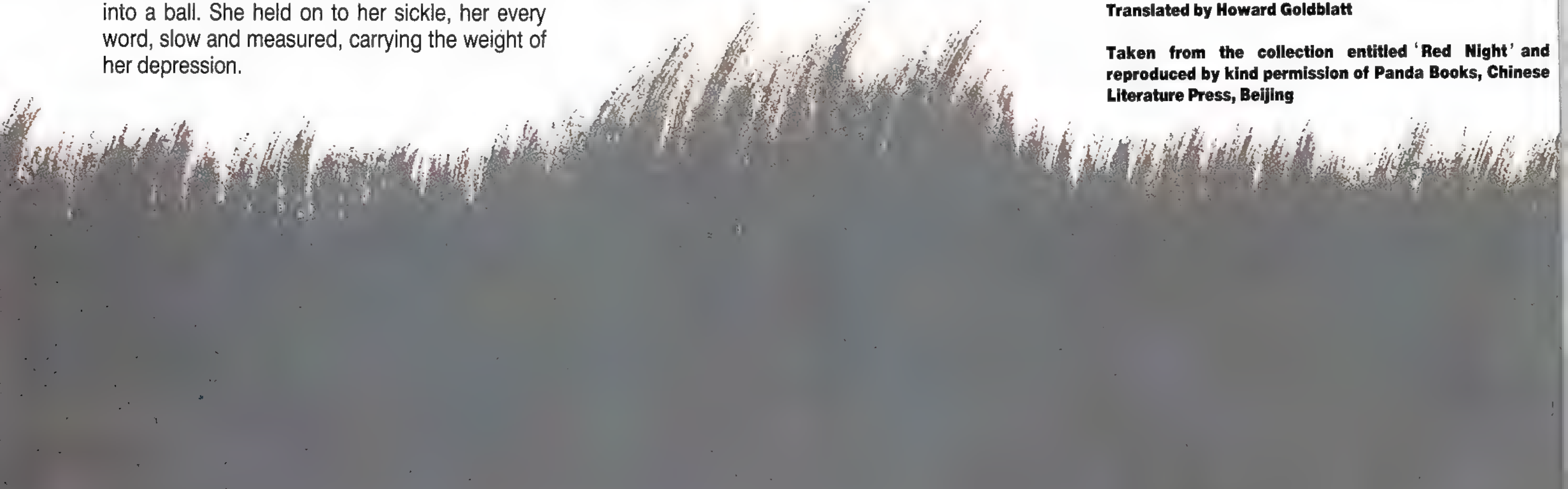

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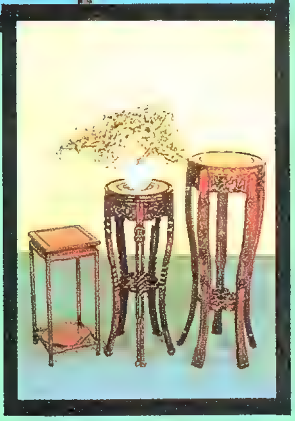

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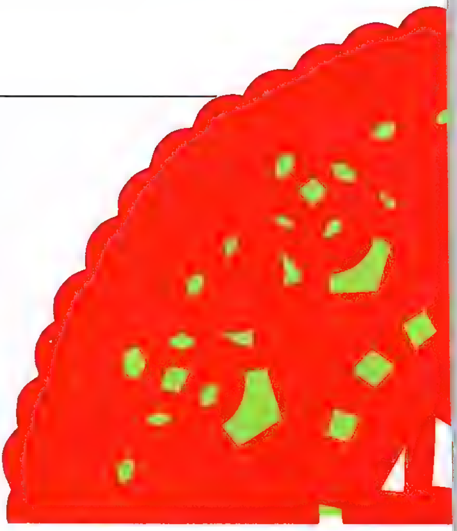


Pilgrimage

Editor's note: The writer is an employee of the Zhejiang Provincial Tourism Bureau in Hangzhou, the provincial capital.

She smiled as I was taking a photo of her. She and her many female companions, all dressed alike, were taking a short rest in front of a Buddhist temple on Tianzhu Road in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province. It was a day in early April.

I ventured to speak to her. However, my standard Mandarin did not work well, and their Wu dialect sounded very hard to me. Her companions joined in the conversation, which made the situation even more confusing. Finally, we all looked at each other and laughed.

For years, I've seen these pilgrims coming to Hangzhou in their hundreds and thousands. The pilgrimage season usually starts soon after the Spring Festival and continues to the Qingming Festival in early April. During this period, pilgrims are everywhere in Hangzhou, whether in the city or along the lakeside roads which lead to their destinations.

Their dress is simple but unique. Each of the pilgrims has a yellow bag or two, and wears a black scarf or a colourful towel on her head. They walk in groups, led by a man or a woman with a small flag just like a tour leader. Something particularly attractive is the pinkish flower they insert in their hair to show that they have finished their circuit of the temples.

Nestled in seclusion along a narrow valley, three Buddhist temples, Fajing (Mighty Mirror), Fajing (Mighty Cleanness), and Faxi (Mighty Happiness), have again begun to bustle with people in recent years. Still not yet fully rebuilt after the 'cultural revolution', the three temples are a draw for pilgrims.

Some still go to the Lingyin Temple, a much more famous and larger monastery located on the other side of the hill. But the Lingyin Temple is now choked with ordinary tourists every day, and 'the ticket is too expensive', the pilgrims say, so they prefer the three smaller religious sites.

It cost me fifty fen to enter the Temple of Mighty Mirror, the first of the three. The door was half barred by iron rods and supervised by a nun. Actually, it is a nunnery, housing about thirty women. Built like others seen in the south of China, it is composed of two major buildings. One is called the Hall of the Heavenly Protectors; the other, more important one, the Holy Hall of Daxiong (Sakyamuni). Both the halls and the courtyard were full of pilgrims burning candles and incense. With a long neat grey robe and a black hat, one nun I met looked so peaceful that I took her picture by the side of a very old camphor tree in the yard. She was still young, and there must be something in society that has driven her away into such a secluded place. However, her lips were sealed. Her Buddhist name is Xian Gui (Virtuous Osmanthus).

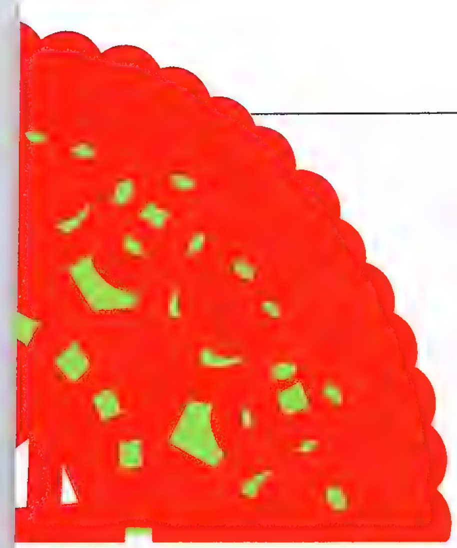
An old lady sitting at a table nearby was more communicative. She was not a nun, she was a retired accountant who had come to the temple to help the nuns with their business. Pilgrims habitually donate money to the temples they visit. Each time they make a contribution, however small, their names are written down in an 'account book'. The old lady's job is to note down the donors' names with a brush. This lady, who worked in a lace factory in Changshu in Jiangsu before retirement, is a strict follower of Buddhism and has remained single all her life. She told me that this was common in her family.

Through conversation, I learned that over one hundred thousand pilgrims come to this temple each year from thirty-six small townships skirting the city of Changshu, the old lady's hometown. 'Since the language they speak could not be understood by the Hangzhou people, I was asked to come here to do a little interpreting work, though the government still pays me a pension.'

A very big stone seal carved in an ancient style stood ready to be imprinted on the pilgrims' yellow bags after they had made a donation. I paid one yuan for a book and another for the seal printing, which read: 'A precious seal granted by the emperor to the Buddhist temple of the spiritual hill'.

I had always thought that pilgrims were all elderly, or at least over fifty. However, what I saw this time proved me wrong. They included people of different generations, from seventy or eighty to three years old.

Buddhists believe that one's heart should be as pure as a mirror, and that the dust on the mirror of one's heart should be cleaned constantly. Hence the names of the two temples in Tianzhu Road: Mighty Mirror and Mighty Cleanness (although the Chinese words for 'mirror' and 'cleanness' sound the same, they consist of different characters). I saw groups of pilgrims praying on the stone bridge outside the temple gate. Their eyes were full



Vithout End

of tears as they looked at the mirror inlaid at the top of the temple's roof ridge.

The next stage on the pilgrims' circuit, the Temple of Mighty Cleanness, does not live up to its name, however. It's dark, musty and crowded, the burning of incense and candles making it even worse. I saw many pilgrims praying and kowtowing in front of a newly-made concrete altar, upon which a small Buddha, dressed decoratively, dominated the darkness in its immobility.

It was about noon. Many pilgrims were lining up near a window, waiting for lunch. One yuan for one bowl of noodles mixed with vegetables. More pilgrims were sitting around the temple precinct, eating the food they had brought with them.

I met a talkative man outside the temple. He was a retired worker assigned by the local government to supervise security in the area, so he wore an armband. He told me something that I had never heard before.

'They are all tourists,' he pointed at the pilgrims. 'Pilgrimage is like tourism. They come in groups, but they do not know each other. They are from neighbouring villages. They put money together for the boat charge, and pay some to the leader who makes all the arrangements for them. Did you see the woman with a flag?'

'Yes,' I said.

'Did you see the small red strips they pin to their clothes?'

'Yes, I did.'

'It is for identification in case someone gets lost.'

'And all those things,' he pointed at objects piled up in the corner. 'They've bought them for their friends and relatives as souvenirs.' (There are dozens of small shops along the valley which sell umbrellas, walking sticks, silk, fans, plastic watering cans, bags and a variety of necklaces, badges and other small gifts.)

Thought of in these terms, a pilgrimage does indeed remind one of a modern package tour. They are formed, conducted and carried out in almost the same way.

'I saw such pilgrimages even when I was a kid.'

'Where do so many of them come from?'

'All over the Hangjiahu Plain.'

'But why?'

'For Buddha's protection, for good harvests and for the safety and happiness of their family.'

The Hangjiahu (Hangzhou-Jiaxing-Huzhou) Plain was flooded by a hurricane last summer, which caused grievous damage. One village was untouched, while the other villages around it were destroyed. This gave rise to a strong sense of Buddha's protection among the lucky villagers. They considered it was due to their faithfulness in worshipping Buddha and coming to the temples every year. Hence, even larger sums of money have been poured into the temples.

The valley was beautiful in the sunshine. Bamboos, tea bushes, and the grass and trees along the hillsides give it a very green look. From the Temple of Mighty Cleanness to the Temple of Mighty Happiness takes about ten minutes on foot. I saw many pilgrims walking up and even more coming down, each of them with a pink flower in the hair.

I had an interesting talk with a young monk two days later on this stretch of road. His name was Dehui (Virtue of Wisdom). He was from Hubei Province, several hundred miles northwest of Hangzhou. He was about my age, around thirty. I was curious about his life. Why did he choose to be a monk? How about daily life in the temple? Did he read the Buddhist scriptures every day, or are they written in classical Chinese and hence difficult for him as well as other young monks? How does tourism relate to Buddhism, and is its impact good or bad? I was concerned about the development of Buddhism in contemporary China.

He answered only some of my questions.

'My parents are lay Buddhists.'

'We have no time to read books. I don't know the Japanese master Daisetz T. Suzuki.' (There are many translations of the works of this philosopher in China.)

'It's very hard for us to understand the Buddhist sutras.'

'Buddhism is related to relativity. For example: image is emptiness; and emptiness is image.'

'Once you get used to vegetables, you feel sick eating meat.'

'I'll leave for the Tiantong Monastery near Ningbo and stay there if I'm lucky.'

At the door of the Temple of Mighty Happiness, which is also the end of the pilgrimage, Dehui and I said goodbye.

There were more pilgrims at this monastery than the other two. A three-metre-long, 1.5-metre-wide brick incense burner stood in front of the temple. I saw one old man, bald-headed, kowtowing on the top step, the smoke from the incense billowing over him.

On the front edge of the brick incense burner there was something particularly rare — paper shoes. Their maker, a middle-aged woman from Wuxi in Jiangsu Province, told me that the shoes were meant for Guanyin (Avalokitesvara).

I watched one woman for a long time until she had assembled her offering. It was a paper pagoda with all kinds of colours. Carefully planned and well designed, it was about one metre high with seven storeys. All the parts were neatly packed in several small cardboard boxes which she had brought with her, together with paste to glue it all together.

In the hall round the altar, coins were littered everywhere, hundreds and thousands of them, like stars, glistening on the floor. People try to press the coins on the pillars for good luck. However, very few remain in place for long.

By the side of the altar, a group of pilgrims clustered round a man, waiting for their names to be read from a piece of yellow paper. Almost all illiterate, the pilgrims wanted to check that their names were read out properly in public. It not only notifies that they are devout, but that they've paid tribute to the temple.

Forty years have passed since the founding of the People's Republic. Education and the 'cultural revolution' (during which religions were totally banned) have affected these pilgrims little. They still pray for Buddha's protection. Some people eat ashes of incense as medicine; and one lady, bare-headed, touched and rubbed the stone lions' heads on the temple door, then touched her own head afterwards. Does it work? However, she believes it does, and that's enough.

I was permitted to conduct an interview with Mr Yu, chief secretary of the Hangzhou Buddhism Association. He is the man actually in charge of all monastery affairs. His answers were very instructive. 'Statistically,' he checked the forms for minutes, '320,000 pilgrims have come to Hangzhou in the first four months of this year.' He continued, 'These pilgrims come from more than a dozen counties in Zhejiang and Jiangsu. These counties are mainly located in the 'Golden Triangle' south of the Yangtse River. They are: Nantong, Changzhou, Wuxi, Changshu, Suzhou and Taicang in Jiangsu Province; and Jiashan, Jiaxing, Pinghu, Tongxiang, Hayan, Yuhang, Deqing and Huzhou in Zhejiang Province. Also Qingpu, Songjiang, Fengxian and Jingshan which fall under the jurisdiction of Shanghai.'

He further told me that the history of pilgrimage in the area can be traced back to the Five Dynasties (907-960) when the last temple, the Temple of Mighty Happiness, was built. The other two were built even earlier: Mighty Mirror in 330 in the Eastern Jin dynasty; and Mighty Cleanness in 597 in the Sui dynasty. However, the pilgrimage did not start to become really popular until the Southern Song (1127-1279) when Hangzhou was the national capital.

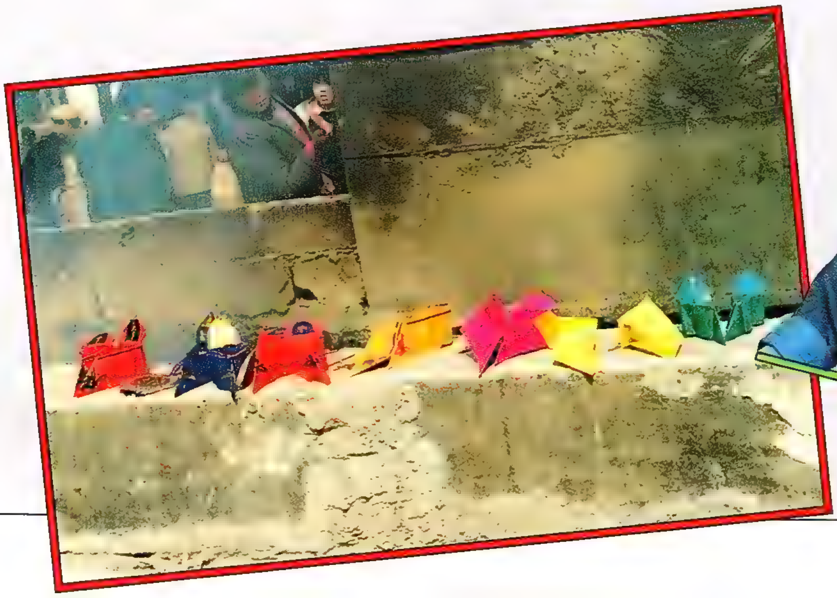
'The pilgrimage is related to silk,' Mr Yu continued. 'The Hangjiahu Plain — the Golden Triangle — traditionally produces silk. It is the women who breed silkworms and tend the mulberry trees. These are vital to their families' lives, and they are dependent on good weather. So women are more likely to come on pilgrimage.'

He told me that the nuns get up at four in the morning and go to bed at nine in the evening. They have three meals a day in their own dining hall. Each of them pays some of their money, given by the Association for living expenses, to the dining hall monthly. During the day, the nuns do their daily routine and, if needed, participate in special ceremonies.

I eventually asked him about the relationship between tourism and Buddhism, which particularly interests me. I used the example of Lingyin Temple which thousands of tourists now visit every day. Quite a few of them do not care for relics, because they lack any knowledge of their value. The crowds disturb the quietness of the temple and the monks hardly have time for meditation. Can such a development be good?

'Buddhists do anything needed. "Serve the people heart and soul" was Chairman Mao's quotation. We take peoples' happiness as ours, and the bitterness as ours too. People like tourism, and so we're ready to serve them. The tourist industry has brought millions of tourists to the temple and it's a great support to us.'

Gao Ye



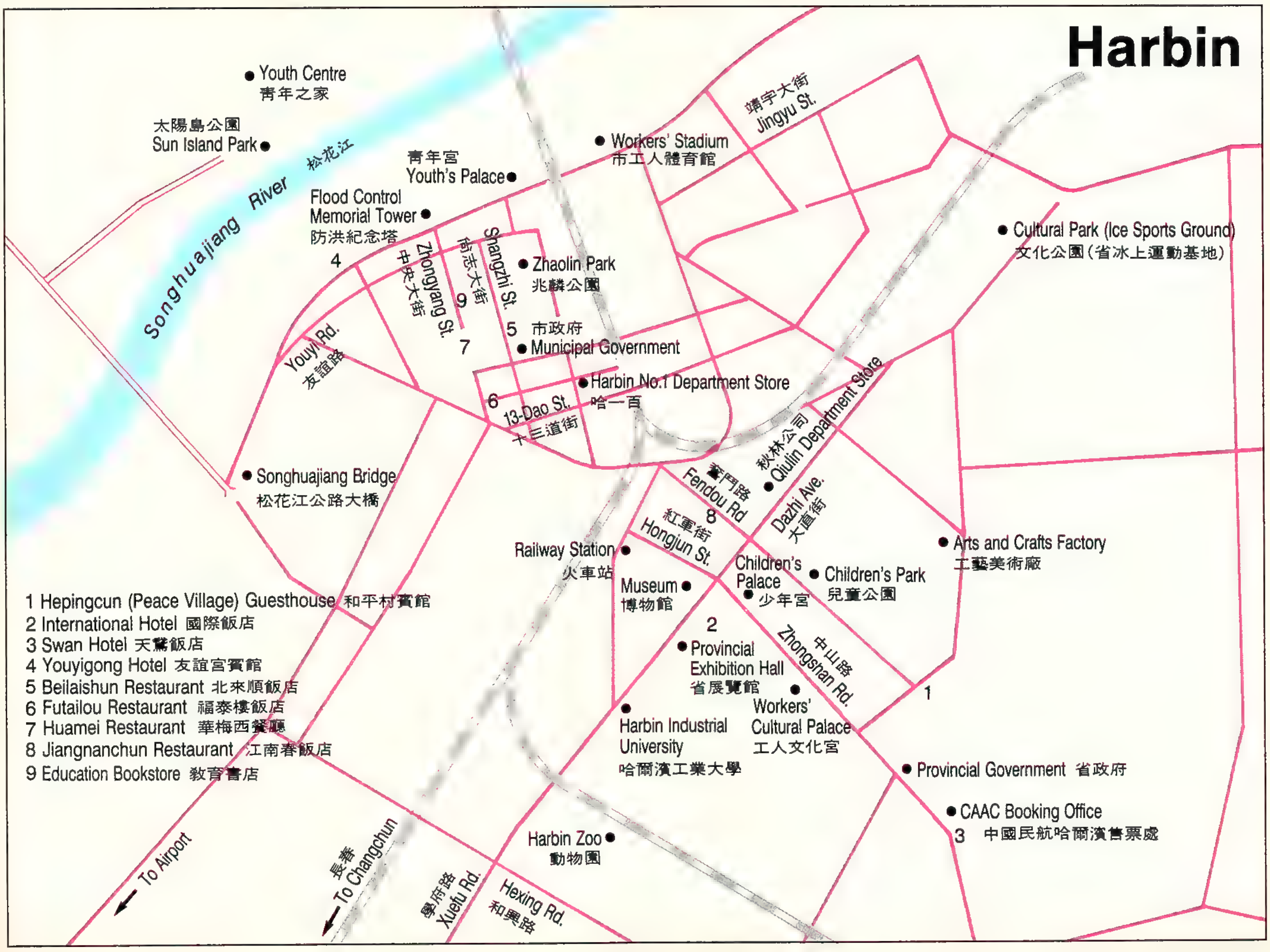
Major Hotels in Heilongjiang Province

	Name	Address	Telephone
Harbin	Swan Hotel	73 Zhongshan Road, Xiangfang District	52796
	International Hotel	124 Dazhi Street, Nangang District	31441
	Harbin Hotel	129 Zhongyang Street, Daoli District	45846
	Youyigong Hotel	57 Youyi Road, Daoli District	46146
	Hepingcun (Peace Village) Guesthouse	109 Zhongshan Road, Nangang District	32093
Qiqihar	Nenjiang Hotel	1 Fengheng Road	73822
	Hubin Hotel	4 Culture Street, Longsha District	73121
Mudanjiang	Jingpo Hotel	At Jingpo Lake	Power Station Switchboard
	Mountain Villas	(ditto)	(ditto)
	Crescent Bay Hotel	(ditto)	(ditto)
	Mudanjiang Hotel	Guanghua Road	26889
Jiamusi	Jiamusi Hotel	Guangfu Road Central	26971
Yichun	Yichun Hotel	Beishan	3471
	Songxue Hotel	Xinxing Road Central	2491
Dailing	Dailing Hotel	Dailing	Dailing Area Switchboard
Langxiang	Langxiang Hotel	In front of the station	Forest Office Switchboard
Taoshan	Taoshan Hotel	Taoshan	405
Wudalianchi	Longquan Hotel	1 Zhongyang Street	162

Flights to and from Harbin

Route	Days of Week	Dep.	Arr.	Flight No.
Beijing–Harbin	2	13:20	14:55	9601
	6	10:40	12:15	2603
	1 6	09:35	11:30	1603
	2 5	10:45	12:30	6166
	4 7	10:20	12:05	6168
	1 3 5	09:20	11:05	6170
Harbin–Beijing	2	15:50	17:30	9602
	6	13:00	14:40	2604
	1 6	12:10	14:05	1604
	2 5	13:20	15:05	6165
	4 7	18:20	20:05	6167
	1 3 5	11:50	13:35	6169
Guangzhou–Harbin	2	11:35	15:40	3603
	4 7	13:02	17:35	6362
	1 3 5 6	09:35	13:15	4631
Harbin–Guangzhou	2	16:35	20:40	3604
	4 7	12:50	17:05	6361
	1 3 5 6	14:05	18:10	4632
Shanghai–Harbin	2 5	15:35	18.20	5603
	4 6	12:00	14:45	6562
Harbin–Shanghai	2 5	18:55	21:40	5604
	4 6	15:30	18:15	6561
Shenyang–Harbin	1 3 5 7	14:10	15:45	6668
Harbin–Shenyang	1 3 5 7	08:10	09:35	6667
Heihe–Harbin	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	10:00	11:35	6666
Harbin–Heihe	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	07:50	09:25	6665
Jiamusi–Harbin	1 3 5	14:10	15:20	6662
Harbin–Jiamusi	1 3 5	12:25	13:35	6661
Mudanjiang–Harbin	2 4 6	19:35	20:35	6162
Harbin–Mudanjiang	2 4 6	08:00	09:00	6161

(Valid from 1st November, 1989 to 31st March, 1990)


Harbin
Youth Centre 青年之家
太陽島公園 Sun Island Park
Songhuajiang River 松花江
青年宮 Youth's Palace
Flood Control Memorial Tower 防洪紀念塔
Workers' Stadium 市工人體育館
靖宇大街 Jingyu St.
Cultural Park (Ice Sports Ground) 文化公園（省冰上運動基地）
Zhongyang St. 中央大街
尚志大街 Shangzhi St.
Zhaolin Park 兆麟公園
5 市政府 Municipal Government
Youyi Rd. 友誼路
Harbin No.1 Department Store 哈一百
13-Dao St. 十三道街
秋林公司 Qiulin Department Store
Songhuajiang Bridge 松花江公路大橋
Fendou Rd 奮門路
紅軍街 Hongjun St.
Dazhi Ave. 大直街
Railway Station 火車站
Museum 博物館
Children's Palace 少年宮
Children's Park 兒童公園
Arts and Crafts Factory 工藝美術廠
Provincial Exhibition Hall 省展覽館
中山路 Zhongshan Rd.
Harbin Industrial University 哈爾濱工業大學
Workers' Cultural Palace 工人文化宮
Provincial Government 省政府
CAAC Booking Office 中國民航哈爾濱售票處
Harbin Zoo 動物園
To Airport
長春 To Changchun
學府路 Xuefu Rd.
Hexing Rd. 和興路
1 Hepingcun (Peace Village) Guesthouse 和平村賓館
2 International Hotel 國際飯店
3 Swan Hotel 天鵞飯店
4 Youyigong Hotel 友誼宮賓館
5 Beilaishun Restaurant 北來順飯店
6 Futailou Restaurant 福泰樓飯店
7 Huamei Restaurant 華梅西餐廳
8 Jiangnanchun Restaurant 江南春飯店
9 Education Bookstore 教育書店

Train Schedules
Sankeshu – Taoshan – Jiamusi

275 F.T.	193/192 F.T.	139 F.T.	Train No. Station	140 F.T.	194/191 F.T.	276 F.T.
From Dalian	From Jinan	From Beijing	**Sankeshu**	To Beijing	To Jinan	To Dalian
12 03	01:29	23:09	**Harbin**	06:43	04:22	20.06
14:16	03:34	01:18	**Suihua**	23:21	02:17	17:43
16:14	–	03:14	**Taoshan**	21:17	–	15:52
17.33	06:37	04:32	**Langxiang**	20:00	23:08	14:34
17:51	06:56	04:50	**Dailing**	19:39	22:48	14:14
18:34	07:39	05:33	**Nancha**	19:01	22:11	13:37
21:00	09:57	08:00	**Jiamusi**	16:18	19:36	10.53

Train Schedules
Beijing – Harbin – Qiqihar

137 F.T.	39 Exp.	17 Exp.	Train No. Station	18 Exp.	40 Exp.	138 F.T.
08:35	20:32	14:30	**Beijing**	11:55	06:32	04:10
10:51	22:19	–	**Tianjin**	–	04:55	02:23
14:17	–	–	**Beidaihe**	–	–	22:38
15:15	01:53	18:46	**Shanhaiguan**	07:49	01:24	21:53
18:06	04:12	–	**Jinzhou**	–	22:59	19:09
21:54	07:22	00:44	**Shenyang**	02:32	20:20	15:42
02:42	11:30	04:09	**Changchun**	22:27	15:51	10:53
06:17	14:55	07:16	**Harbin**	19:03	12:24	06.54
	–		**Sankeshu**	18:22	–	06:10
	17:10		**Daqing**		09:59	
	19:04		**Qiqihar**		08:07	

Exp.–Express
F.T.–Fast through passenger train

Average Climatic Conditions in Heilongjiang Province

		Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Qiqihar	Temperature (°C)	-19.5	-15.4	-5.3	5.4	14.1	20.2	22.8	20.9	14.0	4.7	-7.2	-16.5
	Rainfall (mm)	2.2	1.8	5.6	13.4	31.0	64.0	126.5	98.7	49.4	16.1	3.5	3.4
Harbin	Temperature (°C)	-19.4	-15.4	-4.8	6.0	14.3	20.0	22.8	21.1	14.4	5.6	-5.7	-15.6
	Rainfall (mm)	3.7	4.9	11.3	23.8	37.5	77.9	160.7	97.1	66.2	27.6	6.8	5.8
Tongjiang	Temperature (°C)	-22.2	-18.3	-7.2	4.5	12.5	18.2	21.9	19.7	13.4	3.9	-8.1	-19.5
	Rainfall (mm)	2.9	5.0	8.4	27.1	48.0	71.5	120.8	103.6	61.4	33.9	12.2	7.1

Restaurants in Heilongjiang Province

	Name	Address	Telephone	Specialities
Harbin	Jiangnanchun Restaurant	319 Fendou Road, Nangang District	38798	High-class Chinese food and banquets, including roast duck, vegetables, shark's fin soup, hazel grouse (nicknamed flying dragon), bear's paw soup, etc.
	Futailou Restaurant	19 Shangzhi Street, Daoli District	44721	Shandong traditional food, Peking roast duck and local Heilongjiang dishes
	Beilaishun Restaurant	113 Shangzhi Street, Daoli District	45673	Traditional Hui mutton hot pot and other Moslem food
	Huamei Restaurant	142 Zhongyang Street, Daoli District	47368	Russian cuisine
	Laodu Yichu Dumplings Restaurant	58 13–Dao Street, Daoli District	45017	Beijing traditional pickled vegetables and dumplings
	Japanese Restaurant	Opposite the Youth Palace, Hongjun Street, Nangang District	33081 –844	Japanese and Chinese dishes
	Taiwan Restaurant	130 Xida Zhijie, Nangang District	36740	Taiwanese food, hot pot, and Palace cuisine
Qiqihar	Baihuayuan Restaurant	Longhua Road	27341	Game
	Longsha Restaruant	Door No. 2, Longsha Garden	23285	Northern hot pots
Yichun	Yichun Restaurant	Fanrong Road	3674	Palace banquet, traditional dishes
	Sanguan Restaurant	Tonghe Road West	696	Eastern and Western food, game
Mudanjiang	Zhengyanglou Restaurant	Shizheng Street	28429	Different types of set meals
	Yanyunlou Restaurant	Jiefang Road	25675	Different types of set meals
	Jiangcheng Restaurant	Shizheng Street	28656	Northern dishes
	Chang'an Restaurant	Chang'an Street West	23860	Local Heilongjiang dishes
	Baihuayuan Restaurant	Dongyitiao Road	22410	Northern dishes, set meals
	Shuxiang Restaurant	Xisantiao Road	24173	Sichuan cuisine
	Longjiang Restaurant	Bei'an Street	23032	Northern dishes
	Yuanlongbao Restaurant	Dongyitiao Road	28867	Steamed buns
Jiamusi	Jiamusi Restaurant	Zhongshan Road Central	25713	Traditional set meals
	Songhuajiang Restaurant	Zhongshan Road Central	23985	Traditional food

Heilongjiang: Past Coverage in CHINA TOURISM

No. 25	Race of fishermen — the Hezhen
No. 43	Heilongjiang Special (Harbin, Oroqen way of life, ancient Bohai capital of Shangjing, three rivers — Heilongjiang, Songhuajiang and Wusuli, special cuisine, Wudalianchi, ice sculpture)
No. 54	Mohe — China's 'Arctic'
No. 66	Northeastern Border Special (upper reaches of River Heilongjiang, hunting in Greater Hinggan Range, fishing for 'magic fish', ice wedding)
No. 70	Border trade centre of Suifenhe
No. 97	Mud therapy at Wudalianchi

Heilongjiang's Other Attractions

Heilongjiang manages to present quite a few geographical superlatives. It contains China's northernmost town as well as its easternmost. Below we look at these and a few other places of interest not covered in our Special Features section.

Mohe

Mohe has certainly earned itself the nickname 'China's arctic'! Set at a latitude of 53°30'N on the River Heilong, it is the furthest north settlement in China and experiences 'white nights' around the time of the summer solstice, when the sun can be seen for twenty-two of the day's twenty-four hours. Other phenomena common at this latitude include the aurora borealis — strange, coloured light patterns which flash across the night sky. It is also famous as the place where China's lowest absolute temperature — -52°C — was recorded in 1965.

More recently, in May 1987, Mohe hit the international newspaper headlines because of the enormous fire, the worst in China in living memory, which devastated a million and more hectares of forests in the Greater Hinggan Range. Mohe was among the wooden-housed settlements which were gutted, with considerable loss of life, as the fire raged. The town has since been rebuilt and life has resumed, although many areas of forest are expected not to grow back fully until the mid-1990s.

Huma

Further south and east but still on the River Heilong, this town experienced a gold rush in the 1880s since the area is rich in gold reserves. Not so long ago a local gold-miner found China's largest ever individual nugget of gold; it weighed fifty grams. The river which gives Huma its name threads its way through the forests of the Greater Hinggan Range and offers excellent sport fishing. This is also a good base for anyone interested in visiting one of China's smallest minority groups, the Oroqen (see article in Special Features section).

Fuyuan

China's easternmost town, Fuyuan sits on the River Heilong very close to its confluence with the Wusuli. Actually at the confluence proper is a tiny village called Wusu, with a regular population of less than twenty souls. In September every year they receive countless visitors for the salmon-fishing season. There is also a Ming-dynasty fort at this site, from which one can see the largest Soviet city in the far east, Khabarovsk.

Wudalianchi

The scenic attractions of Wudalianchi (Five Interlocking Lakes) are to be found northeast of Qiqihar in Dedu County. The series of barrier lakes is strung out between fourteen volcanoes (the last eruption took place 260 years ago) in a vast lava field.

The mineral springs of the area are famous for their remedial properties, and more than forty clinics, spas and rest homes have been built there. The waters can be drunk or soaked in, and are said to benefit the digestive system, the nervous system, the circulation and the skin. They are also promoted for weight reduction.

The volcanic mud too is claimed to have sundry curative effects. People wallow in it full-length to treat disorders including rheumatism and scalp and skin conditions. It is supposed to cure baldness if applied regularly over a certain period of time.

The Drinking Festival, a revival of an ancient medicinal ceremony which used to be attended by the herdsmen of the area, now takes place every year on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month (generally in June). For more on the volcanic past of the region, see 'A Natural Volcanic Museum' in CHINA TOURISM no. 97.

All Aboard the Children's Train!

As the railway hub of the northeast, Harbin offers a special treat for children. The miniature train in the Children's Park on Fendou Road in the city was inaugurated in June 1956. Its 'route' is a loop of two kilometres around the park which takes about fifteen minutes to cover. The diesel locomotive draws seven carriages taking around two hundred (children-sized) passengers.

Even the interior is modelled on that of a real train, with wooden seats which are also to scale. The starting point is 'Beijing Station', similar in design to Beijing's railway station, which has a ticket office and waiting room. At the far end of the circuit is 'Harbin Station'.

All the 'staff' of this railway — including station master, driver, ticket collector, inspector, railway policeman and station announcer — are Harbin primary school pupils who take advantage of holidays and spare time to offer their services free ... and doubtless have fun themselves.

The children's train operates from early May to the end of September. The park itself is open from eight a.m. to five p.m. every day.

To Freeze or Not to Freeze?

Located in China's far northeast and covering an area of 469,000 square kilometres, Heilongjiang is the coldest region in China. Nevertheless, even within the province, temperature differences can be enormous. The experts say that the temperature drops by 1.5°C for every one-degree rise in latitude from south to north. Thus, the northern part of the Greater Hinggan Range is the coldest in the whole country, with temperatures dropping to below −45°C. In general, the average daily temperature in these mountains is below freezing point from early October to April.

This northeastern part of China has more extreme temperatures in any case than equivalent latitudes in western Europe. Huma, for instance, lies on roughly the same latitude as Paris, slightly south of London, yet its July temperature can be higher than either of those two cities (Harbin, further south, can post 36°C in July). However, its winter lows are incomparably lower than in the European cities.

Let's take Qiqihar in western Heilongjiang as another example. Average temperatures can be below 10°C for as long as seven months. Winter proper, with temperatures below zero, lasts for five months and the coldest month produces an average of −19.5°C. At a depth of three to four metres, the ground temperature never rises above freezing. Another example. On July 4 1967, according to the records of the weather station at Keshan County, also in western Heilongjiang, the temperature rose to 34.8°C during the day. Nevertheless, the earth was still frozen 1.7 metres down. In other words, only the topsoil had thawed. And Keshan is not even in the true permafrost zone!

Heilongjiang is blessed with many rivers. In fact, the province is named after its largest river, the Heilong (Black Dragon). Known internationally as the River Amur, this forms much of the Sino-Soviet border in the east. But many other cities and geographical regions take their name from rivers: the cities of Mudanjiang (River Mudan) and Suifenhe (River Suifen), the regions of Songhuajiang (River Songhua) and Nenjiang (River Nen), and even the Sanjiang (Three Rivers) Plain — the three rivers in question being the Heilong, Songhua and Wusuli.

Unlike other northern regions such as Inner Mongolia or even the Beijing area, much of Heilongjiang does not suffer from drought in the spring. Considerable humidity is locked into the soil as a result of the concentration of rain in the summer months, brought by the southeast monsoons from the Sea of Japan, followed by the long winter freeze and accumulation of snow and ice. Although the ground is in many areas still frozen at the time of the spring planting in mid-April to early May, the long hours of sunlight in the summer help to compensate for the low temperatures early on in the growing season. The Sanjiang Plain, with a number of very large farms, has become one of China's major grain bases, producing wheat, soybeans, maize and rice. Astonishingly, rice even grows in Huma.

The average temperature in July in most areas of Heilongjiang is around 20-22°C. Again taking Qiqihar as an example, the average temperature is 22.8°C, rising to an average maximum of 28°C. But it may drop to 14-16°C at night. On roughly twenty days of the year, the temperature will rise to 30°C. Rivers such as the Songhua and Nenjiang, which freeze hard for five months of the year, become a magnet for swimmers in the summer months. But, just like other northern areas of the world, the summer warmth here brings with it a horde of mosquitoes and midges, enjoying a brief lease of life before the more typical cold weather returns.

Translated by M.K.

NEWS

Tibet Studies

A new English-language journal, *Tibet Studies*, has recently been launched by the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences in Lhasa. The inaugural issue contained eighteen articles on sundry topics to do with Tibet and Tibetan affairs. The journal, which will appear every six months, is distributed by the China International Book Trading Corporation.

Yellow River Hovercraft

The first Chinese-built deluxe hovercraft has been put into service on a tourist route along the Huanghe (Yellow River) at Zhengzhou, Henan Province. At this point of its course the great river is calm and wide. The hovercraft can pass over rapids, shoals and swamps with ease. Points of interest accessible along the route include Hulao Pass and the ancient capitals of Luoyang and Kaifeng.

Pandas in Crisis

A special protection committee has been formed in Sichuan, home of most of China's (and the world's) giant pandas. The intention is to combat the increasing incidence of poaching of the rare and endangered animal.

Officials from the sectors of afforestation, public security, industry and commerce are involved in the committee. According to a representative of the protection branch of Sichuan's afforestation bureau, ninety giant pandas have been found dead since 1983 — three this year so far — but the actual number of pandas killed illegally is almost certainly much higher. There are violations even in areas under state protection, and the increasing human population means more competition with animals for limited resources. To the detriment of the pandas, which have been forced to withdraw to ever higher altitudes. A long-term panda protection scheme being planned will include expansion of protection zones and planting and maintenance of bamboo belts, as well as formation of more patrol teams and involvement of local farmers as watchmen.

Ancient Stone Coffins Found

A large group of stone coffins dating back 2,000 years was recently discovered in Gangca County in Qinghai Province. The first of its type ever found in Qinghai, the cemetery occupied an area of 15,000 square metres.

Over fifty of the coffins have now been opened. Some contained the heads and paws of dogs. Other funerary objects included two-eared pottery jars and pottery spindles, needles, stone knives, and stone and bone arrowheads. Also found in the coffins were many pendants made up of horses' teeth and the teeth and bones of other animals, as well as stone and quartz.

Winter Rates at Beijing Hotels

The centrally located **Palace Hotel** in Beijing has announced a special winter rate valid from December 1 1989 to March 31 1990. Deluxe and superior deluxe accommodation will cost just US$80 per night for single or double occupancy. Guests who prefer Palace Club rooms, with amenities including a private lounge, free drycleaning and laundry, concierge services, and a complimentary cocktail every evening, will find them available at the special rate of US$130 per night.

Still in the Chinese capital, the **Shangri-La Beijing** near the Negotiations Building is offering standard rooms at US$50 and deluxe rooms at US$75 per night over the same period. Guests are entitled to free admission to the health club and the Xanadu Disco. Like the newly opened Traders Hotel at the China World Trade Centre, this hotel is part of the Shangri-La Hotels chain. Amenities include 24-hour business centre, 24-hour room service, IDD, refrigerator and minibar, coffee and tea-making facilities, same-day laundry and drycleaning, and free shuttle service to and within the city centre.

Shanghai-Huangshan Air Link Reinstated

The air route between Shanghai and Mount Huangshan in southern Anhui was restored this October after a two-year suspension. The airport at Huangshan has in the meantime been reconstructed, with an extension of the runways and improvement of runway surface, so that it can now receive larger aircraft. Advanced blind-landing, navigation and communications equipment has also been installed. China Eastern Airlines operates flights on this route every Wednesday and Friday.

Painters on the Silk Road

Two Chinese painters from the Beijing Art Academy are attempting to capture the Silk Road on canvas — the hard way! Zhao Yixiong and his wife Geng Yukun are tracing Marco Polo's route in reverse. Their plan is to drive a new-model Chinese jeep through Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Bulgaria to Rumania, then return by sea, covering an estimated 50,000 kilometres. This novel artistic project is receiving assistance from the Ministry of Culture, Beijing's municipal government and various Chinese ambassadors abroad.

Turning Desert into Oasis

In northwestern China's Gansu Province, more than 460,000 hectares of desert have been turned into oasis. In addition, a forest belt 1,204 kilometres long is bringing 180,000 hectares of desert under control in the Gansu Corridor. The policy of afforestation is going hand in hand with a ban on indiscriminate felling of existing trees and woodlands. Apparently, more than seventy scientific and technical organizations are cooperating to tame desert areas in the province.

Garden Hotel Shanghai

Shanghai has another new hotel in its business centre. The 33-storey Garden Hotel Shanghai opened in October this year. Standing on the site of the French Sporting Club in the old French Concession, the hotel has guestrooms looking out on to a traditional French garden and Art Deco touches creating a stylish ambience. It is managed by Tokyo's Hotel Okura. There are 500 rooms, a ballroom, eleven multi-purpose banqueting halls, a health club with indoor pool, as well as three restaurants and a coffee shop.

Hong Kong's Big Buddha

The world's tallest — 26.4 metres — bronze Sakyamuni has now been completed. The gently smiling Buddha weighing in at 250 tons sits cross-legged 482 metres above sea-level on Hong Kong's Lantau Island, overlooking the Po Lin Monastery. It faces the north, in other words, China. The work of casting, welding and colouring the colossal statue over the last three years was undertaken by the Nanjing Chengguang Machinery Factory, which is attached to the Chinese Ministry of Aeronautics and Astronautics. It took from April to October this year to assemble the 222 bronze pieces which make up the Buddha.

EXT
SSUE

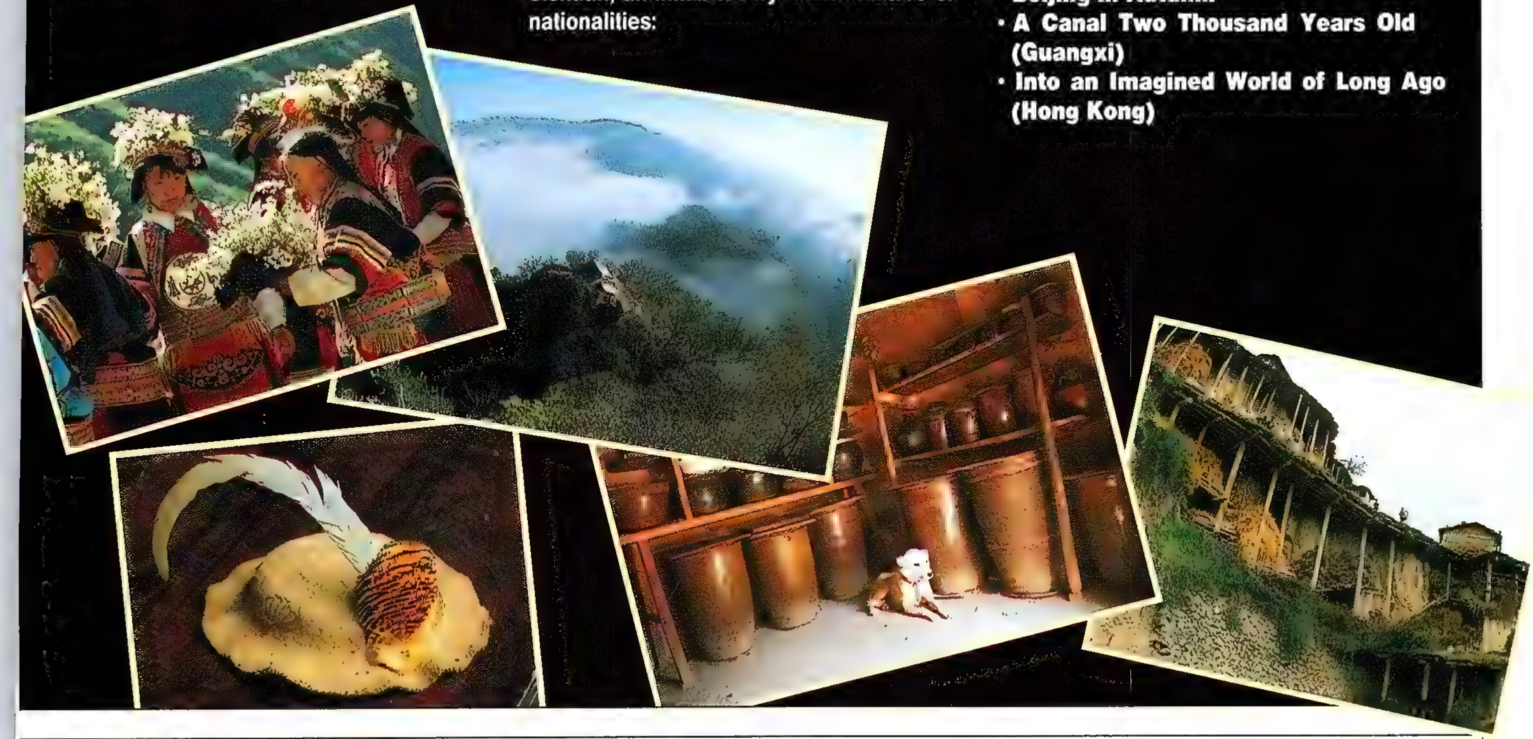
SOUTHEAST GANSU SPECIAL

Located at a geological 'crossroads', this corner of Gansu is surprisingly different from the famous Gansu Corridor. Here we find intimations of the loess country of Shaanxi and the forested mountains of Sichuan, all inhabited by a rich mixture of nationalities:

- **Flower-Gathering Festival at Boyu**
- **A Mountain Hamlet in Zhugqu**
- **The Felt-Hatted Baima**
- **Facets of Life in Rural Longdong**
- **Eastern Gansu's Grotto Art**
- **Mount Kongtong, Taoist Sanctuary**

Other articles will include:

- **Beijing in Autumn**
- **A Canal Two Thousand Years Old (Guangxi)**
- **Into an Imagined World of Long Ago (Hong Kong)**



(Continued from page 15)

Hunters of the Oroqen Nationality

Drinking and eating around their fire, basking in its glow, the hunters often end up by bursting into song, perhaps choosing the famous folksong *Ehulan Dehulan*, a sample verse of which runs:

Ehulan Dehulan,
Hey! Let us dance and be merry!
Look! Pigeons are dancing in the sky,
Monkey are leaping on the mountains,
All things on the earth are dancing.
Look! In the valley below the mountains,
Even the shamans are dancing.

And when the alcohol has done its work well and truly, all they need do is slide into their fur-lined sleeping bags of soft deerskin, laid out on the snowy ground, as the forest resounds with deep snores....

Living this simple and in many ways rather primitive life, the Oroqen have retained other traditional customs. For instance, they nourish their children with roedeer milk — but not by milking the living animal, as one might expect. No, when they catch a doe, they cut off its udder at once, immerse it in cold water, then boil it for half an hour or so until milk is obtained.

The Versatile Birch

Although they number many more now than in 1949, there are still only around four thousand Oroqen in China. Unlike their nomadic ancestors, the Oroqen of today are settled in villages. They no longer wander about, following the tracks of wild animals according to season, although they may be away from the village for several days at a time when a hunting trip is organized.

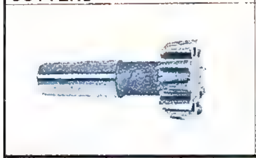
Thanks, no doubt, to their long association with forests, the Oroqen feel a special affinity for trees and particularly for the graceful silver birch. Even today, their furniture and many of their everyday implements and tools — including the babies' cradles – are made from the bark of the birch. In May and June the trees are carefully stripped of bark. As the bark contains resin, it is solid and durable, and it is a good material for making baskets, bowls, sewing boxes, and many other articles.

The people living in the Huma Valley even make light canoes from birch bark. These canoes are about four metres long and can be carried by one man. The frames are planks of pine held together by flexible weeping willow twigs or roedeer tendons. The seams between the pieces of bark are plugged with tar (natural tree resin was used in the past). These canoes glide noiselessly towards animals and birds so that the hunters can kill them at short range with a spear. In the past bows and arrows were also frequently used as weapons. Harpoons or tridents are used for fishing.

Most Oroqen homes seem to have great heaps of such birch bark articles piled up both inside and out. The Oroqen say that, even if these things just lie there unused, they are a constant reminder of the great forests of birch, pine, cypress and camphor trees ... of past days when they 'killed deer with wooden clubs and caught fish with ladles, while pheasants flew into their cooking pots' ... of the hunting they will enjoy when winter once again returns to the Greater Hinggan Range.

Translated by Gu Weizhou

錐柄直齒插齒刀
TAPER SHANK PINION CUTTERS



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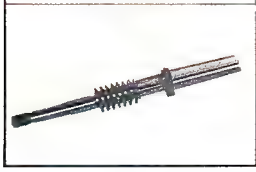

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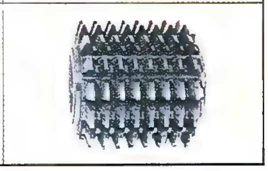

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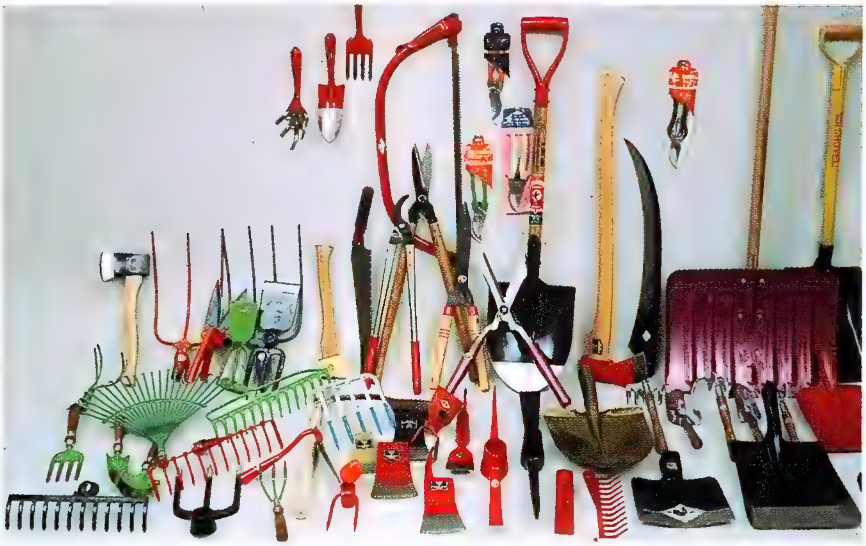

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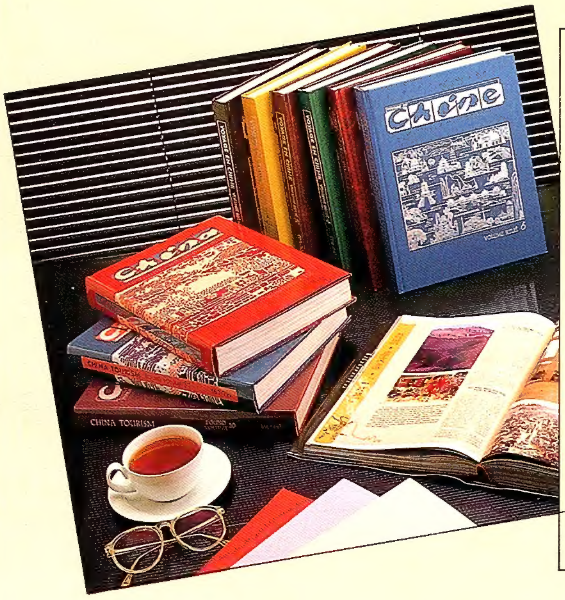

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The aim of this company is to fully develop the resources of agricultural side-line products of Jilin Province. It is a combination of 128 enterprises with comparatively strong production capability and management ability which will enable the company to integrate production, supply and sales into one body and to deal with agricultural products, side-line products and special products at the same time.

This company will still use the Jilin Branch Corporation as a "window" to deal with foreign of China National Cereals, Oils & Foodstuffs I/E countries. Besides continuing to handle major commodities such as cereals and grain, meat, fruits and vegetables, canned products, sugar, etc., it will also handle other agricultural and side-line products. At the same time, it will develop joint capital and cooperative business, introduction of technology from abroad, compensation trade, barter trade, etc.

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General Manager:
Xhu Dexeng

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